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# THE BRIC-A-BRAC COLLECTOR

A PRACTICAL GUIDE BY  
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& MACIVER PERCIVAL  
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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## PREFACE

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AS with the other volumes in this series, "The Bric-à-Brac Collector" is intended for those who love interesting old things, and more especially for those who like to search in the byways where "picking up" may still be practised, rather than keep to the less thorny path where the only passport necessary is a well-filled purse. In it are included twenty-three chapters, each dealing with one of those minor branches of collecting which are perhaps most likely to prove attractive to those who like to obtain their treasures at first hand.

When we came to plan "The Bric-à-Brac Collector" in detail, the first difficulty presenting itself was that of the meaning of the term. Even the makers of dictionaries differed in their definitions, and we found ourselves faced by a preliminary problem which turned out to be the most serious we were to encounter.

Dr. Johnson does not even include "bric-à-brac" in the eighth edition of his dictionary, from which we inferred that bric-à-brac of the eighteenth century was not known as such by those who gathered it about them in their homes. In "The Paris Sketch Book," published in 1840, Thackeray opens his last essay by stating that

"The Palace of Versailles has been turned into a bric-à-brac shop of late years, and its time-honoured walls have been covered with many thousand yards of the worst pictures that eye ever looked on."

Here pictures are clearly indicated; yet twenty-two years later when he came to write the "Adventures of Philip on his Way through the World," Thackeray makes much of the Little Sister's desire to help his hero in a time of dire distress by proffering

"not only that gold which she had been saving up against rent-day, but the spoons, the furniture, and all the valuables in the house, including perhaps J. J.'s bric-à-brac, china and so-forth."

In that same year, in "Ravenshoe," Henry Kingsley describes a room "in which "there was too much bric-à-brac and too many flowers." George Eliot uses the word in "Middlemarch" and again in "Daniel Deronda," and probably a further search would confirm the impression that the term is mid-Victorian.

But what does it really mean? "The New English Dictionary" has the following:

"BRIC-À-BRAC. Old curiosities of artistic character, knick-knacks, antiquarian odds-and-ends, such as old furniture, plate, china, fans, statuettes and the like."

On one score modern usage of the word compels us to question the accuracy of this definition—for few, if any, dealers in antiques would class furniture as bric-à-brac. Yet we learn from "The Century Dictionary" that the word covers

"Objects having a certain interest or value from their rarity, antiquity, or the like, as old furniture,

plate, china and curiosities. Ornaments which may be pretty or curious but have no intrinsic claim as serious works of art."

There may well be a difference of opinion about the correctness of the view expressed in the sentence last quoted, especially in the light of prices recently paid for certain objects of vertu which are undeniably bric-à-brac.

Not being quite satisfied with either of these definitions, we have looked up a third authority, to wit, Noah Webster, who gives the meaning as

"Curious or antique articles of vertu ; miscellaneous objects of an artistic kind, as antique furniture or metal work."

With Mr. E. W. Gregory's contribution to "The Collector's Series" before us, we have had no option but to discard "furniture," but the rest is here with a liberal interpretation of that phrase "the like," which is used in both the larger dictionaries.

Our volume might have been extended in various directions, but broadly we have restricted ourselves to those things which in the past have ministered to the amenities of the social life of this country of ours.

We have to thank Mr. H. J. L. J. Massé, M.A., author of "The Pewter Collector," for a chapter on Pewter Snuff-Boxes, and Mr. W. A. Young, the author of "The Silver and Sheffield Plate Collector," for Chapter I. From his store of information about the domestic metalwork of bygone days, Mr. Young has further assisted us with short notes, mainly of a technical or historical character, which have been

incorporated in sundry chapters. We are obliged to him also for obtaining from some of his business friends some excellent photographs of authentic examples of metal bric-à-brac.

We are also indebted to Messrs. George Newnes Ltd. for permission to include the article on Watches which appeared on January 3, 1914, in *The Ladies' Field*, and to the Editors of *The Connoisseur*, *The Queen*, and *The Lady* for permission to make use of portions of articles which have appeared in those periodicals.

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# THE BRIC-À-BRAC COLLECTOR

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TOYS OF AUTOLYCUS

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THE toyman of the eighteenth century was the Autolycus of his day and generation. He—it was sometimes she—was the “snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.” Much of the bric-à-brac which remains with us to the present day, was originally shown at, and sold over, his counter. From these shops issued a continuous stream of novelties in wood, bone, glass, ivory and metal. There is no specific reference to a toy-shop in Pepys, but one suspects that that shopper and gossip knew quite well more than one proprietress at the Exchange, whose establishment answered to the toy-shop of the next generation. Quite early in the Diary one reads :

“ In the afternoon, my wife and I, and Mrs. Martha Batten, my Valentine, to the Exchange and there upon a payre of embroidered and six payre of plain white gloves I laid out 40s. upon her. Then we went to Mercer’s at the end of Lombard Street, and there she bought a suit of lute-strings for herself.”

The last-named item was precisely the kind of "unconsidered trifle" that the toyman kept in stock and sold to the butterfly public of his time. Snuffers, which are dealt with elsewhere in this volume, were, and still are, technically known as toys, and in a later entry in the *Diary* a "snuffe-dish" of silver as a new purchase, is mentioned. Probably a search would disclose a fair number of similar references to "toys" within a later meaning of that term.

We get to sure ground at the end of Queen Anne's reign, for the *Tatler* mentions a certain Charles Lillie in several numbers. We have not been able to satisfy ourselves whether there was an actual tradesman, or whether the name was only applied by Steele to one of the many characters which he introduced into the succession of papers he edited. Anyway, Lillie is mentioned, not only in the *Tatler*, but also in the *Guardian* and the *Spectator*. When he was introduced in No. 92 of the first-named journal, Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff prints a letter which he had received from one Charles Lillie, "a perfumer at the corner of Beaufort building, in the Strand," and incidentally adds that he sold "snuff next door to the Fountain tavern . . . and was burnt out when he began to have a reputation in his way." Commenting on the letter, Steele went on :

"There is something so particular in the request of the man, that I shall send for him before me, and I believe that he has a genius for bawbles. If so, I shall, for aught I know, at his shop, give licensed canes to those who are really lame, and tubes to those

who are unfeignedly short-sighted, and forbid all others to vend the same."

All this, of course, is part of the side-play affected by Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff as general mentor of public morals. A week later, Mr. Charles Lillie's orange-flower water is recommended to "the handkerchiefs of all young pleaders" as a cure for hesitation, and as a gargle to give "volubility to the tongue." Nothing yet about toys, but we shall see presently that the toyman of the period dabbled in all sorts of quack preparations. Four months later Lillie crops up again and we get the first direct reference to the toy-shop. What follows is from the *Tatler*, No. 142, published on March 7, 1709-1710:

"He is a person of a particular genius, the first that brought toys in fashion, and bawbles to perfection. He is admirably well versed in screws, springs and hinges, and deeply read in knives, combs or scissors, buttons or buckles. He is a perfect master of words, which, uttered with a smooth, voluble tongue, flow into a most persuasive eloquence; insomuch, that I have known a gentleman of distinction find several ingenious faults with a toy of his, and show his utmost dislike of it, as being useless or illcontrived; but when the orator behind the counter had harangued upon it for an hour and a half, displayed its hidden beauties, and revealed its secret perfections, he has wondered how he has been able to spend so great a part of this life without so important a utensil. I will not pretend to furnish out an inventory of all the valuable commodities that are to be found at his shop."

Steele proceeds to "take a rise" out of Charles

Lillie's stock of pocket-books : " very neat and well-contrived. Not for keeping bank bills . . . but admirable for registering the lodgings of Madonnas, and for preserving letters from ladies of quality." There are similar gibes about this tradesman's whips and spurs, his seals, pistols and fuses. His " tweezer cases are incomparable—you shall have one—not much bigger than your finger with seventeen several instruments in it, all necessary every hour of the day, during the whole course of a man's life." There follows an amusing passage about clouded canes :

" He has spent his most select hours in the knowledge of them ; and has arrived at that perfection, that he is able to hold forth upon canes longer than upon any one subject in the world. Indeed, his canes are so finely clouded, and so well made up, either with gold or amber heads, that I am of opinion that it is impossible for a gentleman to walk, talk, sit or stand, as he should do, without one of them. He knows the value of a cane by knowing the value of the buyer's estate. Sir Timothy Shallow has two thousand pounds per annum, and Tom Empty, one. They both at several times bought canes of Charles : Sir Timothy's cost ten guineas, and Tom Empty's five. Upon comparing them they were exactly alike. Sir Timothy, surprised there should be no difference in the canes, and so much in price, comes to Charles : ' Damn it, Charles,' said he, ' you have sold me a cane here for ten pieces and the very same to Tom Empty for five.' ' Lord, Sir Timothy,' says Charles, ' I am concerned that you, whom I took to understand canes so much better than any baronet in town, should be so overseen. Why, Sir Timothy, your's is a true Jambee, and esquire Empty's only a plain Dragon.'

" This virtuoso has a parcel of Jambees now growing in the East Indies, where he keeps a man on purpose to look after them which will be the finest that ever landed in Great Britain, and will be fit to cut about two years hence. Any gentleman may subscribe for as many as he pleases. Subscriptions will be taken in at his shop at ten guineas each joint. They that subscribe for six shall have a Dragon gratis. That is all I have to say at present concerning Charles' curiosities."

Even more interesting, if less amusing than the foregoing, are the references to toys in the *Spectator*, where are the advertisements of the eighteenth century toymen. Several names appear repeatedly in the columns of Steele and Addison's paper. The famous Bavarian Red Liquor which rendered "the face delightfully handsome and beautiful" and was "not subject to be rubbed off like paint," was sold only at "Mr. Payne's Toy-shop at the Angel and Crown in St. Paul's Churchyard." A certain Mrs. Osborn, "at the Rose and Crown under St. Dunstan's Church," advertised nostrums for ladies of quality. A Mr. Alcraft, "at the Blue-Coat Boy against the Royal Exchange Cornhil," was another toymen, and among other things he announced a "truly noble Medicine . . . at 2s. 6d. the Vial . . . for cases of violent bleeding of teeth." More to our purpose is Mr. Alcraft's advertisement of his "Famous Original Venetian Straps, neatly fixed on boards for sharpening razors and open knives," and a "most excellent Venetian Mettal Board of the same Bigness, for sharpening all sorts of knives . . . without Trouble

to Admiration, tho' the edge be never so thick or notch'd."

In 1735 Robert Dodsley, bookseller, publisher and playwright, had produced at Covent Garden a play of his own writing. It is entitled "The Toyshop," and introduces the man behind the counter as "a general satirist, yet not rude or ill-natured." This particular representative of the class is made to "strike a lesson or illustration out of a snuff-box, a thimble or a cockleshell." As the play develops we get a series of sharp little word-pictures of the shop and its frequenters. The toyman is not above doing a little money-lending on such good securities as watches, jewellery and the like. More legitimate perhaps is the disposal, to women, of a mirror, a little box and a mask. A gentleman is accommodated with an ivory pocket-book—possibly the sort made up of thin strips of ivory threaded on a pin and sheathed in a metal case. One humorous passage is over a transaction with a dandy looking for a snuff-box with a "naughty" picture in the lid. A young fellow wants a plain gold ring—not for his bride, he avers—but the toyman twits him on the lie and he withdraws it and gets a little fatherly advice thrown in for nothing. There is also an episode with a doddering old man unable to decide whether to buy spectacles with tortoiseshell or silver rims.

A little later in the century, Fielding chose a toyshop as a background for one of his scenes in "Amelia," and specially mentions Mrs. Chevenix, from whom Horace Walpole is known to have bought Strawberry

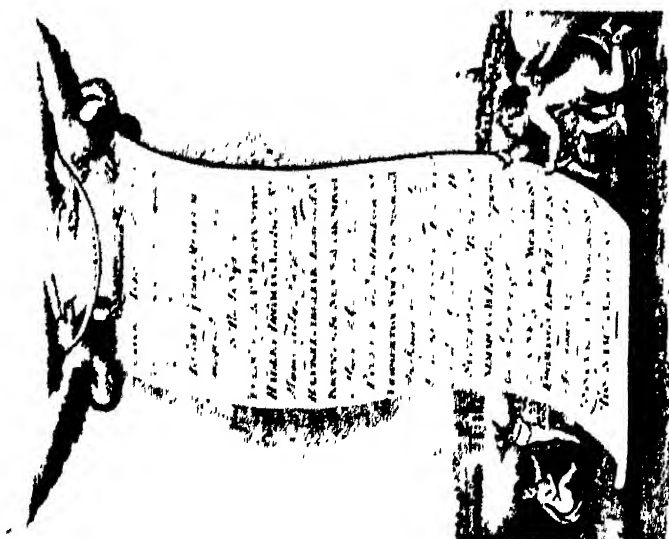
Hill. Another late reference to the toy-shop is to be found in "The Early Diary of Frances Burney," who is requested by one of her country friends to send her by the Exeter coach, "two cricket balls made by Pett of 7-Oaks,—you will get them at any of the great toy-shops." This is the only reference we recall, in the literature of the period, which directly associates playthings with toy-shops.

At the end of the century there was in Birmingham a Mr. James Bissett, who was the proprietor of a "museum." This man published a rhyming directory of the town which was illustrated with little engravings of Birmingham and by super-imposed trade-cards. More than one page contained references to firms engaged in the production of toys, a term qualified in this case by such prefixes as wood, ivory, glass, steel, silver and even gold. Among the articles specially mentioned are pencil-cases, buttons, snuffers, steel buckles, snuff-boxes and gilt trinkets.

As the years went by the industry became more specialised; fashions changed, but the principal side of the business continued, and this branch still produces "light steel toys" in great variety and number. The older examples of steel toys are well worth collecting in a limited way. The list of productions includes snuffers, as we have stated, nut-crackers, "cats"—six-legged affairs for supporting the muffin plate in the fender—so called because the article finds its feet however it is set down, steel spectacle-cases, corkscrews, curling-tongs, bodkin-cases and many other similar articles. It would disturb the balance

PLATE 2.  
Birmingham Trade Cards.







of this book to go more deeply into details, but anyone interested in this particular field should pay a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington and study the small collection of trade catalogues which have been collected by the Department of Engravings, Prints and Designs. There is an inexpensive catalogue of these trade lists which affords a ready introduction to their contents.

Closely allied to this Birmingham industry is the Sheffield craft—now unhappily extinct—of piercing scissor bows. Scissor filing was really brought to perfection early in the nineteenth century, and there is still extant, in the possession of a Sheffield cutlery firm, a small set of pattern-books containing the designs of a certain Peter Atherton who was the best exponent of the art—for it was more than a mere craft. Some of his examples of pierced, filed, enamelled and gilded fancy scissors were really beautiful things. There cannot be many examples available, for scissor filing was slow and tedious work, but any examples that may come before collectors are worth attention. They do not lend themselves to imitation or faking. Peter Atherton had a brother James who filed the scissors which were presented to Queen Victoria on her Coronation, and he afterwards made a replica which was, and for all we know may still be, in the Weston Park Museum at Sheffield.

Other examples of the fine work that can be done by the patient application to metal of fiddle drill and file are to be found in the bows of keys. It would be outside the scope of this book to go into the story of

that craft, and probably few would regard the locksmith's product as bric-à-brac. Nevertheless there were a number of keys made, for Royal parks and other places where the entrance was in the nature of a privilege, and those entitled to exercise it were presented with a key. Such keys can be seen at the London Museum, and as they were rarely used, they are generally in such nice condition as to warrant collecting.

Finally, we want to answer a question which we foresee will be put to the editor of the "Collector Series." "How does all this information help me to decide whether this or that article is a genuine toy of the period under review?" It doesn't! The simple fact is that very few of the articles mentioned in this chapter were marked, while the cost of a patent was too high to warrant official protection against imitation. Identification in specific cases is difficult. All that we can do is to show how very wide was the scope of the toy-shop, and indicate in a general way the extensive nature of its proprietor's business. Up to the present time the only direction in which extensive reproduction has occurred is brass-founding. There are innumerable copies of brass candlesticks and clumsy shelf-ornaments on the market, but these are hardly bric-à-brac. Steel and paste buckles call for careful consideration before they are added to a collection, but such articles as snuffers, nut-crackers, bodkin-cases and similar terms, usually proclaim their origin by their appearance.

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## CHAPTER II

### BRIC-À-BRAC IN BRONZE AND BRASS

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#### THE TWO ALLOYS

THERE is a field of appreciable extent for any collector who may care to specialise in small wares of bronze and brass, but as it is often wise to put a limit to one's enquiry it is proposed in this chapter to deal only with such bric-à-brac as might reasonably be expected to have been made between 1603 and 1837, i.e. the time when James I. came to England and the death of William IV.

It is not necessary in a book of this kind to be too technical, but it is desirable to explain simply the difference between bronze and brass. The former, a mixture of copper and tin, is by far the older alloy, and the "brass" of the English Scriptures was made of those metals. Brass, if one may put it that way, is a "mongrel" metal. Like bronze, its base is copper, but the extent to which it can be debased is alike remarkable for its content and the variety of its constituents. To copper, which may fall lower than sixty parts in one hundred, the brass-founder may add tin in quite small proportions, although he is more likely to leave it out altogether, because it

is always the most expensive of the commercial metals. More commonly the added metals are spelter, which is the name for zinc in ingot form, and lead ; but aluminium, antimony and bismuth are used nowadays in brass for special purposes.

Both bronze and brass are so to speak "under-studied" by alloys which are termed respectively bell-metal and gun-metal ; the last named is a copper-tin-zinc alloy. It's all in the mixture ! From time immemorial tin and copper have been available in this country as founders' materials, but prior to 1781 there was no such thing as zinc or spelter as we know it to-day. Brass had always to be made by the calamine process, which was carried out with an oxide of zinc and involved a chemical reaction. The result was a 66 : 34 alloy, that is to say there was 66 per cent. of copper and 34 per cent. of zinc in it. Nowadays zinc, as spelter, is added directly to the melted copper and the making of brass is greatly simplified.

Birmingham is now the centre of the brass-foundry trades, and since Matthew Boulton founded the Brass-house in 1781 the city has been the principal brass-producing place in the kingdom. Before the period indicated ingot brass was made in Bristol and Warrington on a large scale, and both towns sent their alloy to Birmingham to be worked up into utility wares. Broadly, there were only two ways in which brass goods could be produced. The ingot might be remelted and poured into moulds or it might be rolled into a sheet, which was worked up by hand or under

presses. In these ways Birmingham supplied the needs of craftsmen and householders, turning out brass in the form of cooking utensils, building materials, furniture fittings, and as merely decorative work.

Brass-founding as a trade was begun in Birmingham somewhere between 1689 and 1702, and for more than sixty years the foundry side predominated. In 1769 stamped articles began to be made there, by one Richard Good, who produced among other articles scale-pans, saucepans, kettles and warming-pans. Good stamped the parts which were put together to complete the articles offered for sale. A few years later John Marston introduced improvements in the presses, and he was able to make door-furniture, fittings for upholsterers, and a hundred and one other items which came to be classed under the term cabinet brass-foundry. The effect was to reduce the weight of the finished product, for obviously a stamped article could be made much thinner from sheet-brass than from cast metal. Designs, however, degenerated in style; they were broader in outline, and were finished as struck. There was neither need nor inducement to chase the work, as was customary with the better class of cast work.

The dates 1769 and 1777 respectively, as being those which saw the beginning of Good's and Marston's inventions, should be kept in mind, as they help one to decide the age of certain sorts of brass work. A piece palpably stamped in a press, would not be older than the last quarter of the eighteenth century: beyond that we cannot safely dogmatise.

## SOME SPECIAL BRASSES

In the pursuit of his hobby the collector of brass wares will sooner or later encounter certain names to which age has given a thin cloak of mystery. Although there is nothing out of the ordinary about these alloys, it is uncertain, in some cases, how they came to be named as they are, hence the little glossary that follows may prove useful :

*Princes Metal*.—A yellow-red brass ; made from copper and zinc, the former up to as much as 88 per cent., and rarely below 65 per cent. Tin added in some cases up to 6 per cent.

*Pinchbeck*.—A copper-zinc alloy ; the former usually over 90 per cent. Possesses a red colour.

*Tombac*.—An alloy used for buttons, usually between 92 and 8 per cent., and 84 and 16 per cent. The copper occasionally up to 99 per cent. Colour according to proportion of copper.

*Bath Metal*.—A yellow alloy of copper and zinc mixed in the proportions of 83 and 17 per cent., or thereabouts. Sometimes termed Similor.

*French Oréide*.—A similar alloy, golden in colour. The copper may be as high as 90 per cent.

*Mosaic Gold*.—An alloy of full yellow colour. The copper content usually under 70 per cent. Other names for the grade were Hamilton's Metal and Chrysorin.

*Gilding Brass*.—A copper-zinc alloy of a rich yellow colour. Tin added up to 3 per cent.

*Ormolu*.—An alloy possessing a golden bronze colour of French origin ; a typical mixture was copper 58, zinc 24, tin 18 per cent.

*Latten*.—The name applied, down to Tudor times, to sheet brass. It frequently occurs in old documents such as wills and inventories.



It will be asked how it came about that alloys, apparently similar in mixture and content, varied so in colour? The answer involves explanations too technical for this book, but broadly speaking the differences were due to the way in which the metal was melted and to the fluxes used by the founder to cleanse the pot before it was poured.

Wares made of brass never came within the purview of the warden of a guild. There was never any compulsion to mark these with a touch, as pewter was expected to be marked. Nor was there any legal obligation to submit the unfinished articles to an assay office, as the silversmiths were compelled to do under various pains and penalties. The old bell-founders who turned out a certain weight of metal in the shape of mortars, measures and skillets, had at least tradition to guide them. They commonly put a stamp on their castings, pressing letters and figures, sometimes even devices, on their moulds. The history of that craft has been comprehensively treated, and, not infrequently, it is possible to trace an article to its original source by the marks on it. There was not even tradition in the Birmingham trade, and neither brass-founders nor stampers cared for the goodwill that grows around a name with a reputation behind it. That idea was of later growth.

Mention has been made in the first chapter to the collection of Trade Catalogues at the Victoria and Albert Museum. More than twenty of them are devoted to brass wares, and a few bear direct or indirect evidence of the approximate dates at which they

were published. Those catalogues, if their contents could be exhaustively analysed, would probably yield a good deal of information about the brass industry during the half-century between 1780 and 1830. One recalls a commode-handle on which Napoleon is depicted in a warlike attitude in front of a besieged citadel. Another is adorned with a portrait-bust of George Washington, and one infers from these and other specimens, not only an approximate date, but also the markets to which the goods were shipped. Once in a while the descriptions in these catalogues include the single word "PATENT," and when that is present it affords a clue which can be followed up at the Library of the Patents Office in Southampton Buildings. Whether the collector pushes an enquiry of that sort to a conclusion must depend upon the degree of his, or her, enthusiasm for the hobby that is being ridden. All we have to do here is to indicate some of the byways which may lead the collector to undertake a detailed exploration of the subject-matter.

Before proceeding to the consideration of special groups the collector must be warned against forgeries and reproductions. Most of the brass wares displayed by the dealers in antiques and old furniture is modern, and the honest dealer makes no secret of the matter. The fact that old brass is more frequently imitated than either pewter or silver suggests that plenty of fraudulent selling goes on, and the unwary are all too often caught and fleeced. There is no royal road to the determination of old from new. The surface of brass can be finished so cleverly that even the

expert buyer finds it difficult to decide the merits, from the point of view of age, of this or that example. Sooner or later every collector of brass gets bitten !

Bronze can often be distinguished from old and dirty brass by the familiar patina which a copper tin alloy always takes after prolonged exposure to the air. Collectors should be reminded, however, that some things which look like old bronze, turn out on closer acquaintance to be spelter, to which has been imparted a bronze colour. The real nature of the metal can be decided by scratching the underside with the point of a knife or awl, and examining the mark in a good light. If the article is zinc (spelter) the colour will be white and silvery ; if it is bronze, it may be anything between a rich yellow and a light red.

#### SOME FINISHING PROCESSES

A certain quantity of old brass was mercurially gilded, and where an article has been so treated, and carefully tended, it may retain its original appearance in no small degree. Old French clock cases, and the attendant ornaments, were usually finished in this way. In the catalogues already mentioned there are several illustrations of clocks in the French style. They are priced at preposterously low figures, anything between three half-crowns and a sovereign. No self-respecting clock would go at the prices quoted. The explanation seems to be that the Birmingham brass-founder offered his French customers sets of castings, which the purchaser chased and gilded, and fitted with the movements and dials for which his countrymen were famous.

## THE LOST WAX PROCESS OF CASTING

A method, practised largely by the Chinese and Japanese metal craftsmen, is known as the *cire perdue*, or lost wax process. Avoiding technicalities again, this is a method whereby intricate designs, as for example a bronze vase, covered externally with dragons and other fearsome-looking beasts, can be cast in relief with a certainty of getting the artist's own "feeling" faithfully presented. He will first of all make his design in wax, which being plastic can be worked with appropriate tools until the requisite degree of perfection is attained. No detail is too minute, for all sorts of under-cutting and intricacies are possible with the lost wax process. The design finished, its surface is carefully coated with a clay slurry of the consistency of cream. When the coat is quite dry another is applied, and the operations of coating and drying are repeated alternately until an appreciable thickness of the clay wash has been accumulated round the model. A quicker and more modern method is to make a mould of plaster of paris round the wax, but that is not permissible if the work is of the finest character. The mould is then placed in a "flask" and foundry sand is carefully rammed round it. What are known in the trade as the "runner" and "riser" are provided; one to let the metal enter the mould, the other to provide an outlet for the air, and incidentally to serve as a ready indication when the metal is "up" and the cavity filled. Up to the present we have left the wax inside the flask, but when the mould is finished, it is turned over and

with runner and riser at the bottom it is placed in an oven or muffle hot enough to melt the wax. Most of it runs away, and the rest is volatilised, leaving the mould ready for pouring. The outer side of the cavity so formed bears the design of the craftsman, and an *objet d'art* produced by the lost wax method possesses the desirable quality of uniqueness. The craftsman might conceivably repeat his design, but he would not duplicate it exactly, as when once the wax was melted out and the metal poured, that particular mould would be done for ; the next would be sure to differ in some respect.

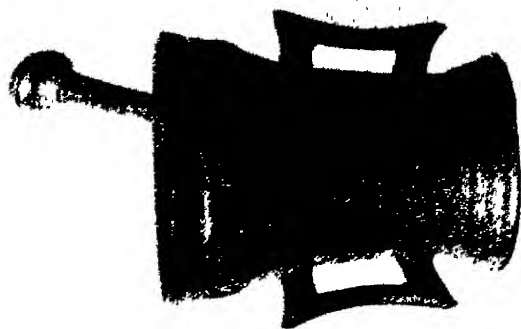
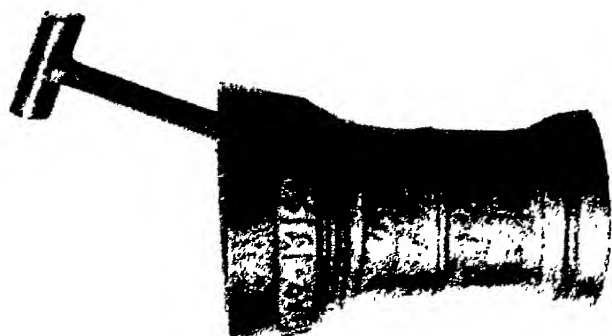
It would be out of the question to attempt to describe the many colour finishes applicable to bronze, but they range from the darkest of reds, through browns and greens, to light golden yellows. Before the discovery of electro-deposition in the "forties" of the last century, bronze effects on alloys were produced chemically and by heat treatment at moderate temperatures. To-day metal colouring is a branch of the plater's business, and an extraordinary range of colours, many of them of great beauty, are being done. How far it is permissible to restore an old and shabby bronze must be left to the individual taste, but if it is reasonable to clean a good brass candlestick at regular intervals, it does not seem inconsistent, once in a while, to renovate the surface finish of a good piece of bronze which has become disfigured by exposure to dirt or damp. Artistically nothing compares with the natural patina due to oxidation in a clean atmosphere, but there is a difference between

## PLATE 3.

## DUTCH BELL-MORTARS.

1. Dated MCCCCCXIII.  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter, 5 inches high. Weight, 8 lbs. 6 oz.
2. Early 17th Century. 8 inches diameter,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches high. Weight, 20 lbs. 3 oz.
3. Dated 1619.  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter,  $5\frac{3}{8}$  inches high. Weight, 7 lbs. 1 oz.

*Photo by S. W. Woolley.*







verdigris and patina, and if the acid bath bites away the former and leaves the surface patchy, the best plan, perhaps, is to turn the article over to the restorer and have it appropriately coloured.

A word or two in conclusion about damascening, which is the inlaying of gold and silver in baser metals, usually iron, bronze and copper. Not much is done nowadays, for it is laborious and slow work, and except in the East, where labour is very cheap, the cost is prohibitive. The art has long flourished in Oriental countries, but examples have come down from Germany, Italy and Spain; and the craft is still carried on by the swordsmiths of Toledo. There are various ways of getting the effect of damascening, but for the simpler designs the surface is chased with a sharp tool the point of which produces a slight undercut. Then the gold or silver wire is driven into the incisions with little hammers, which cause it to spread and "key" in the groove. Alternatively definite patterns are engraved, and the space is filled with accurately cut pieces of sheet silver or gold. The face of the inlaid work in either case has finally to be rubbed down and polished.

#### BELL-MORTARS AND SKILLETS

There is no alloy of copper quite so satisfactory in colour, tone and a certain pleasantness of touch as bell-metal, which is a mixture of copper and tin. Small handbells for domestic service are mentioned elsewhere, but such bells, however old they may be, are rarely other than brass. To make a collection

of church bells would be out of the question and wide of our subject; but there are a few articles which are not out of place in a bric-à-brac cabinet provided it is not too small.

Mr. H. B. Walters, in his fascinating story of the "Church Bells of England," quotes a document, dated 1283, which relates to the casting of a church bell at Bridgwater in Somerset. The weight of the bell, which was possibly cast in the churchyard, if not indeed under the belfry, can only be estimated, but the accounts showed that 896 lbs. of new copper was bought, and it cost £7 17s. 3d., and 320 lbs. of tin, the price of which was 38s. 6d. To the above weights must be added 425 lbs. of metal from an old bell and 180 lbs. of metal brought in by the parishioners. This last was made up of two trivets, a bason and laver, and a number of pots. From this circumstance it may be inferred that bell-metal for domestic cooking-pots has been in common use for at least six hundred years. Clearly that founder of the Middle Ages would not have jeopardised his bell by putting into his mixture metal of unknown quality. There is, indeed, enough evidence extant to warrant the belief that a bell-founder's visit provided the countryside with an opportunity for replenishing its stock of pots and skillets.

If the townsfolk and villagers improved the occasion so did the local apothecary, and My Lady Bountiful of the Manor House. Either might require new cooking utensils, but once in a while both would stand in need of a bell-mortar. Older than the bell-metal was the stone-mortar, which had been used all over

the world from time out of mind for bruising corn and rice. The collector's concern is with matters of later date ; of a time when the corn-mortar had been replaced by the grinding-stones, and mortars of metal for domestic use had become a commonplace utensil in the houses of the well-to-do, especially in the country. There it was regarded as the proper thing for the wife of the local landowner to prepare and dispense medicines among the servants and lesser tenantry. Practically there were two ways of extracting the medicinal properties of plants and roots : by distillation, or by reducing the dried parts of the plant to powder. The latter was done in the mortar with a pestle, and as the beneficent properties of poisonous plants were well known, it was customary with My Lady, and Bolus the apothecary, to have at least two mortars, which were probably of different size, the smaller being kept for poisons.

Of recent years pharmacists have paid a good deal of attention to bell-mortars, and some notable collections are in the hands of chemists, both manufacturing and dispensing. Mortars of over 100 lbs. weight have been brought to light, while at the other end of the scale are little articles weighing less than 3 lbs. Old English mortars are usually less ornate than those which were cast on the Continent. The making of a mortar here was a secondary consideration with the bell-founder. He might make one occasionally to oblige a neighbour, or even put a few into stock in order to keep his men at work when not engaged on moulds for bells. He had probably a few stock moulds,

or he might even strike the mortars up in the sand with a strickle. If it occurred to him to do so, or if his customer wanted it done, he pressed a few simple stamps into the sand before he closed the mould, and in that way left a permanent indication of the cast to enlighten or puzzle those who came after him.

In some cases the stamps were those used in his regular vocation, but the mortar being a utility vessel was not supposed to stand in need of decoration, and the ornamentations on English examples are usually simple, not to say severe. Still, many are characterised by lines of great beauty, and those that have handles are often shapely and pleasing to the eye. A common size is round about 5 in. in height and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. in diameter, and in the majority of cases the latter is the larger dimension.

The size of a mortar is not an invariable guide to its weight, for much depends on the thickness of the bottom and the internal contour. A mortar such as we have mentioned might weigh anything from 4 to 10 lbs. At the end of the eighteenth century domestic mortars were made of brass, and these are much thinner than the older patterns. A specimen in the writer's possession is  $3\frac{1}{4}$  in. high by  $4\frac{3}{4}$  in. diam., and weighs no more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs.

A large number of the mortars in collectors' hands are Dutch or Flemish. It is not unlikely that some of them are modern, although the design may be old, for it is known that there are old moulds in the hands of Continental founders. One would think twice before buying a bell-mortar in the open market in Bruges.

These Dutch and Flemish patterns are similar in outline and style to the English, but the mortars of Italy and Spain are more ornate and altogether finer, if regarded as artistic metalwork.

The identification of bell-mortars is tantalisingly interesting. Often the pursuit is beset with difficulty and leads nowhere in particular, but ever and anon the inscription affords a clue which discovers the complete proof of the maker's name, his place of abode, and the date when the mortar was cast. A well-authenticated example bears this legend :

PHILLIP LOCKTON IN ABINGTON GROCER 1653.

No doubt about the matter as far as it goes. We know exactly when it was made, who originally owned it, and we may infer, since it was 10 in. high, 12 in. diameter, and weighed 80 lbs., that it was used by the worthy grocer for purposes of trade. Doubtless some Commonwealth apprentice pounded pepper, spices and mustard in its capacious maw. What we cannot deduce is who was the maker of this mortar.

Another legend that has been recorded runs : "Henrye Neale made thee." Here it is clearly the maker's name that has come down to us, and the clue, thin as it is, has been sufficient to enable us to find out the place where the mortar was cast and its approximate age. It happens that collectors for some time had been trying to identify the foundry from which mortars marked "E.N." had originated. There were several known specimens sufficiently alike to warrant the assumption that they all came from one

shop. One enthusiast began a search of the bell-founders' lists, and partly by putting two-and-two together, and also by the process of elimination, he narrowed the field down to Oxfordshire. His patience was rewarded by finding particulars of a seventeenth century family of bell-founders at Burford whose names included those of Henry Neale and Edward Neale.

Simple initials are hard to follow up; as we have just seen they may prove to be those of the maker, but they are just as likely to be those of the first owner. An heraldic device is sometimes helpful, because it is a guide to the name of the owner, and then if it can be traced to a definite locality it is possible sometimes to identify the bell-founder in that part of the country. Indeed the quest of the bell-mortar is full of possibilities, and if the result of an enquiry is less certain than that which follows the acquisition of a piece of pewter or silver, a solution which satisfies one gives one the greatest pleasure because of the attendant difficulties.

Although very many mortars have gone back into the crucible of the founder, there is a fair number in the hands of dealers and collectors, and a correspondingly reasonable chance of getting possession of one or more specimens if one keeps a sharp look-out for them. The best period extends from the reign of James I. to that of George III. Anything earlier than the Stuarts, if it could be authenticated, would command an almost prohibitive price.

To conclude, we may look a little into the skillet, which was a boiling-vessel akin to the saucepan. It

had, commonly, feet like a three-legged pot, but instead of a bail it had a straight handle. It was made of bell-metal, or more rarely of brass. There are examples of skillets in the British and Guildhall Museums, and in most of the provincial collections. At Lancaster House there is one specimen which has a handle braced so as to form an eye under the point where the handle joins the pot. It is an unusual pattern, and worth special mention. John Warner and his successors, who have carried on the craft of bell-founding in London since the end of the eighteenth century, were makers of skillets, and were wont to mark them with the name on the flat of the handle. There was no rule about the matter, and the chance of identifying a specimen is comparatively remote. Both mortars and skillets are being reproduced, and care and judgment are needed when a purchase is contemplated.

#### THE LESSER PENATES

A short list of the brass of eighteenth century manufacture which might reasonably find a place in a bric-à-brac cabinet is given below, always provided the specimen is genuine. It has been compiled principally from the Trade Catalogues already referred to in this chapter, with such additions as have come under the writer's own notice. Obviously incomplete, it is, perhaps, sufficiently suggestive to afford evidence of the possibilities of this department of collecting.

Anchors

Bed Caps

Bell Pulls

Bell Rosettes

Caddy Mounts

Card Racks

Cats for Plates	Ladles
Chamber Candlesticks	Lustred Candlesticks
Chestnut Roasters	"Nossels and Pans"
Chimney Hooks	Paper Weights
Chimney Ornaments	Pounce Pots
Cloak Pin Heads	Rappers
Club Pole Heads	Roses, Various
Commode Handles	Sand Boxes
Egg Timers	Taper Candlesticks
Escutcheons	Taper Holders
Fender Footmen	Taper Jacks
Fire Screen Roses	Tea Bells
Girandoles	Tobacco Stoppers
Hatch Knockers	Toy Cannon
Ink Stands	Trivets
Knockers	Wafer Boxes

The foregoing list calls for some comment, and first it will be well to put the collector on his guard against faked tea-bells, chestnut-roasters, miniature knockers, taper-candlesticks, ladles and chimney ornaments. The difficulty of determining the genuineness or otherwise of a specimen has already been explained.

It will be noticed that a fair range of furniture mounts are included in the list. They are well worth consideration, for some of them possess artistic quality in no small degree. The bed-cap was a kind of solid escutcheon intended to be screwed over the hole in which was concealed the head of the bed-screw. Some of the designs are quite good, and when, as sometimes happened, the caps were chased before



being mercurially gilded, the finish is excellent. The writer knows of one old piano which is constructed on similar lines, the screw-heads being covered by oval brasses, each having a small hole for an escutcheon pin, and a tiny pip on the back to prevent it from being twisted out of the vertical when the wood is polished.

Chimney-hooks were graceful curved brasses for holding the fire implements in an upright position, and closely allied to them were curtain-band hooks, generally big ugly things and best left alone to find their way back to the founder's scrap-heap. Club-pole heads are rarely met with in London, but they may be picked up occasionally in the West country. They are usually symbolical in design, and were fitted on a pole which was carried in procession on holidays and feast days.

Roses constitute a group of brasses which have been singularly neglected by collectors. The series includes cloak-pin heads, bell-crank roses, commode handles, escutcheons, and the oval and round mounts used to adorn the flat surfaces of furniture of the eighteenth century. Much of this work is executed in good taste, and as has been shown it has sometimes a slight historic interest. A limited quantity was finished by being inlaid with enamel, and that form is obviously more to be desired than simple brass, however well-chased and finished.

Fender-footmen were tall trivet-like fitments, intended to hold the muffin plate or the kettle. A hatch-knocker is a small contrivance for attracting the attention of those on the opposite side of the door

of the serving-hatch. Jack-cranes, particularly those which lock at the right-angle position, are worth picking up because they lend themselves to a variety of uses in and about the house. "Nossels and Pans" were sockets and candle-rings used to reduce the size of the candlestick and catch the grease. Pounce was powdered fish-scales, and the pounce-pot was used to sprinkle over wet ink and also for rubbing down the surface of parchment preparatory to engrossing a legal document. Fine sand was used for the same purpose, and a pounce, or sand, box is frequently found on an old inkstand. A pounce-pot in the writer's collection is egg-shaped and of a generous capacity. It dates back to the eighteenth century, and was an office appointment of an ancestor who is described in sundry places as an attorney-at-law.

The taper-holder was a box for holding a wax-taper coiled in a ball, and the taper-jack, for the same purpose, differed therefrom in being an open wire frame. Tobacco-stoppers were something like a handled seal and were used to push the glowing tobacco into the bowl of the pipe. The wafer-box was intended to hold the little discs of coloured paste with which letters and envelopes were sealed before the stationers hit upon the idea of gumming the flap.

### HORSE-BRASSES AND AMULETS

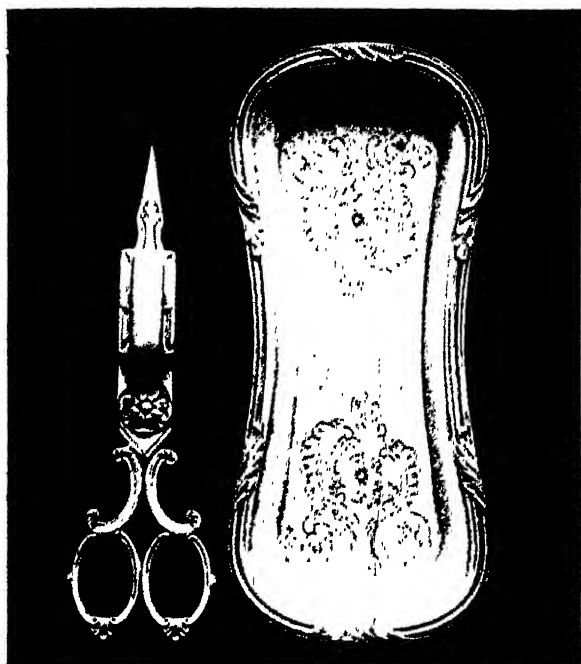
Of recent years there have been many accessions to the ranks of collectors who specialise in horse-brasses. It is a department which has a peculiar fascination for those who are interested in folk-lore. Many of

the designs are symbolical, although we suspect that some of the explanations are rather far-fetched. Mr. Edward Lovett of the Folk-lore Society has paid, perhaps, as much attention as anyone to the problems involved, and his view is that the horse-brass is a survival from the remotest times. In its primary forms the horse-brass is a disc, usually rayed, a crescent or a heart. The first shape represents the sun, the second the moon, both being connected with worship, while the third was a favourite charm for the protection of life. Another writer on the subject, Dr. Charles R. Plowright, suggested in *The Reliquary* in 1906, that the origin of amulets was Moorish, and he made some interesting comparisons between the designs of door-knockers in southern Spain and of others which had come under his personal observation in East Anglia. He showed also that when it was a matter of numbers the knocker seemed connected with the horse-brass. The lucky star of the Moor had eight points and seems confined to horse-brasses, on which it frequently figures, but the significance of five comes out alike in the handgrip of plenty of knockers and the five-rayed star which is identical with the mullet of heraldry. Five, in a word, was supposed to protect a person from the baneful influence of the evil eye. A hand showing four fingers and a thumb fixed on the door of the house as a knocker, protected the home and its inmates ; five in an amulet, strung on the harness of one's beast, made the animal safe against the ills of the road. Among other designs in brasses which have been identified as Moorish are

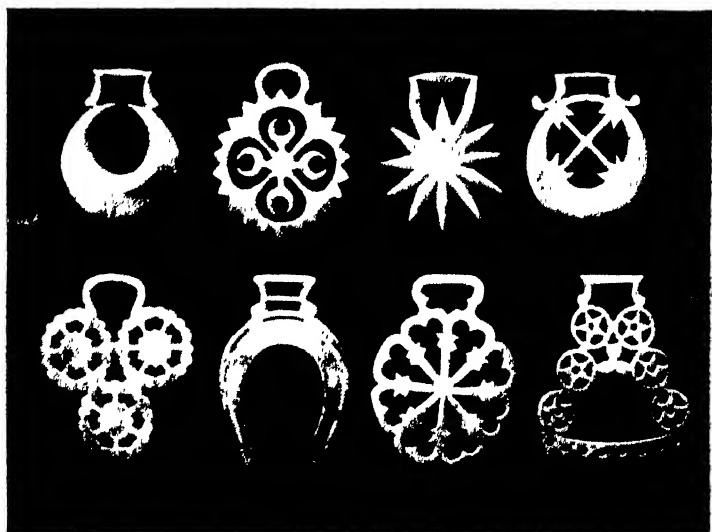
## PLATE 4.

1. Plated Snuffers, Close, and Tray, Old Sheffield Plate, chased bottom. Silver (loaded) border, thread pattern with leaf relief. c. 1820. (See Chapter V.)
2. Group of Horse-Brasses or Amulets from the collection of Mr. W. Toombs.

*Photo by W. A. Young.*



1



2



the pilgrim's shell, the *lotus* and the interlocked equilateral triangles, a device which is commonly known as the Seal of Solomon on the Shield of David. This last may be older than the others, and is perhaps of Oriental origin. There is a passage in the Book of Judges (chap. viii. v. 21) which lends colour to the view that the East had the amulet long before the Moors of Spain. Gideon in one of his encounters with the Midianites "slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks." The marginal reading in such cases is often more illuminating than the text, and from it we learn that the ornaments were "like the moon." More explicit still is the rendering in the Revised Version which translates the doubtful word, "crescents."

It would run to too great a length to try to trace a tithe even of these devices to their source. Someone has estimated from observation, that there have been more than 300 distinctive patterns in use in these islands. Some are obviously modern; the designs prove that to be the case—a locomotive could not have been adopted earlier than George Stephenson's time, and may well have been later. On the other hand, the Tudor rose is conceivably 300 years old, while a passable reproduction of the earliest representation of Queen Victoria's profile, obviously modelled from the coinage, is later than 1837. A goodly number of these brasses depict familiar objects of the countryside—horses in various attitudes, a wheatsheaf, a squirrel, a mill, a plough, a greyhound and a stag. Others may have been prompted by local circumstances or

by trades. One would expect to find a ship on the martingale, or face piece, of a horse regularly drawing loads to the quayside. A thistle suggests a Scottish origin, and three legs in a circle, the Isle of Man. A well-authenticated pattern shows what is generally known as "the Staffordshire knot" in a heart, while those that embody a horseshoe may be attributed to the belief in luck which is associated with that article, or it may have been suggested to the brass-founder by a farrier. One suspects that the founder who put the brewer's dray in a brass had some sort of business connections with a brewery.

Closely allied to the flat brasses are terrets and flyers, in which the device swings in a ring cast on a short brass support. Regarded as collectors' specimens they are not so satisfactory as the flat brasses, being difficult to clean, and far from easy to display in an artistic fashion. In any case the cult of the horse-brass is far from meaningless; it is indeed one which touches the life of the past at many points, and that in itself is a sufficient warrant for following it as a hobby. As with many other brass objects, there is no way whereby the collector can differentiate between any genuine old brass and a modern reproduction, but those who are trying to accumulate a collection should set their face rigorously against stamped brasses; they at any rate are not really old. Perhaps the best plan to follow is to seize every opportunity of hunting for examples in the smaller shops dealing in odds and ends and in the warehouses of the marine store-dealers, where old brasses can occasionally be found. There is just a chance



that what is picked up in this way may be old, whereas brasses bought in good condition are pretty certain to be reproductions, straight from Walsall, which is the home of the saddlers' ironmongery business.

### TRADE TOKENS

It may seem a little strange to introduce trade tokens into a book which is professedly concerned with bric-à-brac, but that term, as we have already seen, can be stretched to cover a wide range of articles, anything, in short, which has contributed something to the amenities of social life. Strictly, these coins pertain to numismatics, although they were never legal tender. They were, however, extensively circulated, and their utility was correspondingly appreciated by the people who used them.

A certain amount of minting was done, and allowed, as early as Queen Elizabeth's day in such cities as Bristol, Oxford and Worcester, but in the next reign the problem of any adequate supply of copper "change" assumed a fresh aspect, and James I. granted to Lord Harrington a patent to strike farthing tokens which he was to issue at a price which yielded undue profits to all concerned in their distribution. It was known to the people that the mayors of the different towns to which the "Harringtons" were sent, made 2s. on every nominal pound issued, and it was suspected that the King shared the plunder that fell to Harrington himself. The enterprise was conducted from premises in Lothbury and is still recalled by the name Token House Yard.

The trading community of Stuart times retaliated and, from 1648 on, a great deal of illegal coining went on in England, Wales and Ireland. In spite of orders and regulations many tons of copper were struck into token money. It is estimated that more than 12,000 different coins were designed and issued. Most of them were crude in design and execution, but a few are worth seeking, especially if the collector is interested in a particular town or country, or is connected with some special trade. Another phase of this first period is the part played by the London Companies, for their tokens do afford some clue to the various forms which their arms took. The Ironmongers' Company, for example, used a shield marked with three "gads" (billets) and three shackles on a chevron. Cutlers, who were members of their guild, issued tokens bearing three pairs of crossed swords. A gridiron was one of the devices struck on the pieces of the Girdlers' Company, while three, or in some cases a single hammer was adopted by the Blacksmiths. Many of these old tokens bore a distich which amounted to a promise to honour the token on presentation at the issuer's place of business. Here are two examples :

When you please  
I'll change these.

Although but brass  
Yet Let me Pass.

The collector who wishes to specialise without spending too much time and money on this branch, might see about getting a representative set of tokens of irregular outline, for in addition to rounds there were octagonal, heart, square and diamond shapes. How the last-named must have worn the pockets of

those who carried them ! Again, one might confine one's quest to queer trades, and rejecting the grocers and apothecaries go out for the tokens of the candle-stick-makers, the gingerbread baker, the pinner, the tripeman, the chapman, and the changer of farthings.

The practice of issuing these tokens extended to nearly all the market towns of the three countries, but does not appear to have spread to Scotland. There was something to be said for the authorities, even if they were dilatory, for obviously if the legal tender in bronze coin had been worth its face value it would have been withdrawn from circulation by the bell-founders hard up for metal, with which to make skillets—and less innocent articles. The problem of keeping the coinage intact was not confined to bronze ; the silversmiths of the seventeenth century had no scruples about converting crown pieces into caudle cups. After the Restoration the practice of token-making was checked if not quite suppressed, but a hundred and twenty years later the trouble began again and from 1787 to nearly the end of the eighteenth century immense quantities of tokens were issued. The scandal assumed notorious proportions, and in 1797 after several ineffectual efforts to suppress the practice, the Government of George III. entered into a contract with Matthew Boulton of the Soho Works, Birmingham, to mint penny and two-penny pieces on its behalf. In eight years Boulton converted 4,000 tons of copper into bronze coinage and the evil was checked. Few, if any, examples later than 1802 are known to collectors, and for nearly ten years the

illicit industry languished, only to revive somewhat spasmodically under the stress of the Napoleonic Wars. The theory is that at that time Boulton's substantial pieces really were worth their weight as metal, and a shortage of "coppers" ensued because so many went into the crucibles of the munition makers. Anyway there was a recrudescence of minting token money, which was finally prohibited on January 1, 1818.

Regarded as bric-à-brac, claiming to possess artistic merit, and not without historic interest, the issues of 1787-97 are easily the most to be desired. The drop-press and the fly-press had both been perfected in Birmingham, where was also a highly skilled class of die-sinkers who could, and did, commemorate many notable achievements in industry. They cut the profiles of pioneers in trade and manufacture, and so left permanent records of their appearance, the truthfulness of which, as far as the writer knows, has never seriously been questioned. The builder of the first iron barge on a practical scale was John Wilkinson, whose image and superscription can be found on a token penny which bears in its rim the legend "Bradley Willey Snadshill & Bersham." At each place John Wilkinson had a forge or foundry and at any one of them twelve token coins could be exchanged on demand for a legal shilling. Another token which possesses high historic interest is the Ketley Penny. In 1779 the first iron bridge erected in this country was built at Coalbrookdale. It had a span of 100 feet, and we believe that it still stands, not very far from the great ironworks in which it was constructed. In 1789

another great engineering feat was accomplished by the proprietors of the works, and three years later they issued a penny showing the "inclined plane" on one side and the bridge on the other. There are no fewer than fifteen "states" of the Ketlay penny, the rarest of all being one which shows the arch *without* a boat in the foreground. It would extend this section unduly to go into further detail, but enough has been written to show that there is a mine of interest beneath the trade token. The best books on the subject are G. C. Williamson's edition of Boyne's "Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century" (2 vols., 1891) and a handier book by James Atkins, published in 1892 and entitled "The Tradesmen's Tokens of the Eighteenth Century." The City of London possesses a fine collection which is housed in the Guildhall Museum. It has been estimated that there were 3,550 London tokens issued, of which number about 2,000 varieties are in the Museum. Unfortunately they are in cabinets and are not regularly displayed in open cases. There was a limited issue of silver tokens, which are more keenly sought after than those made of bronze and are correspondingly more expensive to acquire. All in the writer's collection are of bronze. The number is small as his interest is strictly confined to the metal trades, and the cost per piece has been limited to sixpence. Many cost less than that modest sum, and unless a specimen is very badly wanted it is a good plan to "wayte awhyle." Half the sport of collecting lies in keeping a list of undiscovered trifles!

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## CHAPTER III

### SOME QUAIN'T SNUFF-BOXES

"Snuff or the fan supply each pause of chat,  
With singing, laughing, ogling and all that."

—A. POPE.

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THE collector of snuff-boxes generally aims high. He looks for exquisite workmanship, valuable materials and historic associations in the examples he admits to his cabinets. Fine enamelled subjects, gold and gems and the added interest of well-authenticated pedigrees associating each with some well-known name either as donor or as original owner, give to his treasures not only artistic and historical importance, but also a very considerable pecuniary value.

Interesting and beautiful, each after their kind, as are these exquisite *chefs d'œuvre* of the master-craftsmen of the eighteenth century, their acquisition is not to be contemplated by the minor collector. He may indeed love them—but with a Platonic affection tempered by the glacial frigidity of the plate-glass in which museum authorities are wont to enshrine such treasures, retaining the warmth of his domestic affections for those more attainable

objects for which he need not sigh in vain. For even now a very charming and interesting collection of the humbler kinds of snuff-boxes, each with some point of individuality about it, may, if the searcher brings taste and knowledge to the quest, be acquired for a tenth of the price of a single "Royal" diamond-rimmed box.

There are, however, so many little boxes of all sorts to be bought at comparatively cheap rates, that the incipient collector would be acting wisely if, very early in his collecting career, he decided to narrow down the field of his activities. He may, for instance, limit his purchases to one kind, such as pewter or pressed horn, or to snuff-boxes with engravings or painting on the lid, or to any other sort that makes an appeal to his fancy. He may even specialise further: for example, he may only admit snuff-boxes with some political interest or of some particular period or nationality.

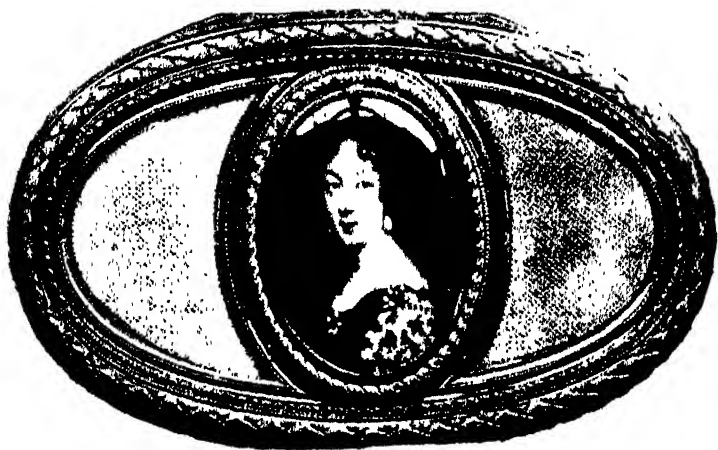
Should he, on the contrary, be more catholic in his tastes—or if he is confined principally to one locality as his hunting-ground—he will very likely prefer to include an example or two of as many types and periods as possible. In this case he should endeavour to secure typical specimens of each kind, setting a rather higher individual standard than when a specialised collection is being made. There are such large numbers of snuff-boxes of some age about, which have little or nothing to recommend them in the way of workmanship or design, that, without some definite end in view, an indiscriminate or "magpie"

## PLATE 5.

## SNUFF-BOXES.

1. Snuff-box. Tinted gold, oval, chased with groups of young Bacchanals, festoons and wreaths, and enriched with translucent blue enamel. In the lid is an enamel miniature of Marie Louise d'Orléans (1662-1689), grand-daughter of Charles II. of Spain; in the reverse is an enamel miniature of Marshal Catinet (1637-1763). French 18th Century.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*
2. Snuff-box. Gold, oblong, chased, and enamelled with groups in the Dutch style. Signed "Le Sureau." Inside the lid is a miniature of the Marquis of Granby, inscribed "John, Marquis of Granby, to Brice Fisher, Esq., 1764." The box French.





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collector will find that he has got together a number of items which are little more than rubbish.

An intelligently selected series, on the contrary, not only shows examples of piqué on ivory and tortoiseshell, turned and carved ivory, pressed horn and delicately engraved or embossed silver and other charming minor crafts in which the eighteenth century artificers were past masters, but also specimens of curious and beautiful materials such as exotic woods of different colours either natural or artificial, animal products such as shagreen and lizard skin, narwhal tooth and fossil ivory and the different metals and alloys, which were all employed by workers who catered for the tastes of those who liked something a little different from those in ordinary use. Most men and not a few women took snuff, and most of them had a number of boxes from which they were able to make choice as their fancy moved them, selecting one which fitted not only the mood of the moment, but the occasion and the company. A plain and somewhat solid silver one might accompany a worthy citizen on his daily business, while to the tavern where his Freemason or other Club or Society held its meetings, he would take one just purchased with a portrait of the hero of the moment on it. He would offer a pinch to a friend, who would comment on the decoration, proffering in turn his own, whereof the decoration might amuse or shock the recipient according to his susceptibility !

For the ladies' use dainty though inexpensive trifles in enamel of simple kind, or porcelain, Sèvres,

Meissen, Bow or Chelsea had their vogue. These, no doubt, as in the case of the printed fan-leaf may have furnished subjects for conversation.

The history of snuff-taking in Europe dates from the sixteenth century, but in the early days its votaries did not carry a box, but a kind of grater or rasp on which the delectable (!) powder was manufactured as required. When we consider the wearisome hours spent by courtiers waiting in ante-rooms and galleries it is not surprising that trivial occupations and toys had their vogue in endless succession, anything, however childish, that filled up their time was welcomed, and snuff-grating had its day like cup-and-ball and the "Pantins" or mannikins with movable limbs. The early snuff-graters or rasps are treasure trove for any collection, as they are scarce and often beautifully ornamented. One of these, dating from the end of the seventeenth century and adorned with arabesques, was recently discovered among a lot of "unconsidered" trifles in a country-house where its use had long been a puzzle to the owners. It was apparently English, but as a rule, most of these rasps are French. They are generally longer than they are broad, and the decoration is in the front only, as the grater formed the back. They were made of various materials, copper, pewter, silver or ivory, and their use was not abandoned until the nineteenth century.

About the end of the seventeenth century the use of boxes for carrying snuff became general, and from the first, handsomely ornamented boxes appear

to have been the rule. The use of snuff was, in its early days, to a great extent confined to the immediate entourage of the Court, and the richness of the boxes of course corresponded with that of the rest of the costume and environment.

During the course of the eighteenth century, however, the use of tobacco, both for smoking and in powder, spread, and became diffused through all ranks of society. It was partaken of on all occasions, and less elaborate boxes were naturally introduced. The following are some of the varieties which may be met with.

*Vernis Martin.*—This term is used to describe a very fine clear varnish said to have been invented by the Brothers Martin about the middle of the eighteenth century. It was applied over paintings on a variety of materials and used for numerous purposes, from large panels for screens, furniture, coaches and sedan-chairs to the most dainty fans, étuis, bonbonnières and snuff-boxes. These little boxes are generally decorated on a base of fine wood or ivory. The paintings are as a rule of fine workmanship and rich colour, which is enhanced by the luminosity and lustre of the varnish. Some people like to describe any painted box which has a coat of clear varnish as *Vernis Martin*. This is, of course, quite incorrect. The true product is almost colourless and possesses a very fine and brilliant lustre with a hard surface which does not scratch easily.

*Oriental Lacquer* boxes were used in the eighteenth century, also European "Japan" which followed the

original as near as it could ; these boxes are not common.

*Porcelain* snuff-boxes of different factories were in favour ; they were mounted as a rule in gilt metal. Sèvres, Meissen, Bow and Chelsea are said to have been makers of snuff-boxes.

*Tortoiseshell*.—This is of two varieties, dark and blonde. It was a very favourite material for snuff-boxes from about the middle of the eighteenth century. It was decorated in a great variety of ways, piqué by means of numerous tiny points of gold or silver and inlaid with plates of the same metals cut into designs and pressed into the shell so that they together formed a smooth surface ; these plates were engraved with lines to add details to the pattern, which varied according to the period of manufacture. Rococo designs were most popular during the middle third of the century, and Chinoiserie were also much favoured. Later a more severe type of design was favoured and precise but delicately executed wreaths and classical *motifs* were chiefly employed. At the end of the century lines and dots were grouped to form a kind of meaningless pattern.

Tortoiseshell was also carved, and various boxes dating from 1750 are beautifully executed ; gilding was sometimes employed to heighten the effect. Quite plain turned tortoiseshell boxes lined with gold had a great vogue towards the end of the century. They are peculiarly refined in effect, and the delicacy of finish and fineness of workmanship is remarkable.

*Puzzle Boxes*.—These range from the exquisite product of the goldsmith's art to quite simple turned

wood. The object of them all is, however, the same, i.e. to conceal in a compartment either in the lid or the bottom portraits or other paintings which it is desired not to reveal to the casual eye. Sometimes the portrait was a picture of a friend or lover, or in the troublous times of the century's end of Louis XVI. and his Queen, but in a number of cases the picture is of an indelicate character. If the hidden compartment is in the bottom it is sometimes to be opened by unscrewing the reverse way; if it is in the lid there is often a small bayonet catch which is concealed in the decoration, or the false top is hinged on, the opening being achieved by pressure on the proper point with a pin. It is seldom very difficult to decide whether a box contains a concealed compartment, as the extra thickness is at once apparent. Sometimes the exact method of opening gives some little trouble, especially if the box has been laid aside and the catch has stiffened with dirt. A close examination, however, shows one point or spot in the decoration a little larger or more prominent than its fellows and the opening is soon accomplished. Rather more difficult to discover are the comparatively rare instances in which the picture is inside on the under surface of the lid, covered by an inter-lining which is simply pressed in and held in place by friction, but there are generally a few scratches or dints on the lining which show that it is movable.

Most of these boxes date from the middle of the eighteenth century and are of French origin.

Other puzzle or "joker's" boxes are somewhat

different in their purpose; they have double hinges, thus forming two compartments, the lower of which is filled with snuff, while the second shallow box (forming the lid which may be shut down over it) is empty, so that the owner may take a pinch of snuff from his box and then pass an apparently empty box to an amazed friend, a simple form of practical joke soon discovered, but which, no doubt, caused some amusement at first.

*Boxes decorated with Applied Engravings.*—Towards the end of the eighteenth century the general trend of all personal equipment was towards simplicity.

The round snuff-boxes of papier mâché or turned wood had an enormous vogue; they generally had either a more or less rough painting or an engraving on the lid. The subjects varied with the fashions of the moment. Balloons were a very favourite subject about 1783, and the enthusiasm aroused by the performances of the Montgolfier Brothers Joseph, Michel and Jaques Etienne, found expression in the decoration of all kinds of trinkets, such as coat-buttons, sweetmeat-boxes and snuff-boxes with their counterfeit presentments. Many boxes were made in different materials, such as carved ivory and pressed horn, in honour of the intrepid brothers, while for the multitude round or oblong boxes were ornamented with applied engravings pasted on and varnished. There are several patterns, none of them particularly well executed. Later, in 1797, the invention of the parachute revived the waning vogue and balloon-boxes again became the fashion.



In France the snuff-box was a recognised means of expressing personality and opinions. Was a man a Royalist ? His box would have a portrait of the King, or, if that were too dangerous, a design which indicated to the initiated only the loyal sentiments of the owner. The " patriot " on the other hand had on his box one or other of the symbols of " Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité." The Cap of Liberty was a very frequent subject for snuff-boxes. Not only were they made in the shape of a cap in pewter or other cheap material, but it was impressed on horn, carved in ivory, and the wooden boxes had a rough engraving of it glued on the lid. It was *par excellence* the symbol of the Revolution, and from 1789, when it replaced the Royal crown on the municipal seal of Paris until, wearied by disorder and uncertainty, the troubled nation found a new idol in Napoleon, it was quite the most popular decoration.

Of *Napoleonic snuff-boxes* there are an enormous number, both French and English. On the former he figures as the great national hero, or the beloved leader of the ever-victorious army. The English snuff-boxes depict him almost invariably from a humorous point of view, and " Boney " is shown retreating howling before the onslaught of a red-cloaked old woman and in various other undignified situations. Nearly all of the English snuff-boxes of the type popular during the first ten or fifteen years of the nineteenth century are roughly painted in oil colours with caricatures and grotesques. A very favourite subject is an ingenious rendering of the popular theme—

"Before and after Marriage."\* The heads of a man and woman are depicted. The woman has a cap on her head and a white fichu; the man wears a red headgear and a portion of a red coat appears. The painting can be looked at either way up, the portion of cap being so painted as to look like a fichu when reversed, and similarly the man's red cap turns into a coat and *vice versa*. The only difference is in the faces. "Before," they are comely and amiable, "After," the scowls and frowns make them most unattractive. Though roughly executed, these paintings must have been carried out by workpeople who knew exactly where to place each touch, as the expressions are life-like, though grotesque, and the way in which the outlines are schemed to be recognised either way up is decidedly clever.

On the whole, however, the majority of the snuff-boxes with pictorial decorations are not worth acquiring, as they have dull uninteresting subjects with neither charm nor originality to recommend them.

*Papier Mâché Boxes.*—Here again the collector would do well to exercise discretion. The papier mâché box, rectangular in shape and decorated with metallic lines pressed into the surface, was quite a late introduction, and examples are so numerous as to be hardly worth acquiring. There are, however, some Victorian boxes with inlaid decorations of mother-of-pearl painted and gilt so as to represent tiny bouquets of flowers or landscapes with a waterfall or lake which have a certain old-world charm and

\* *Vide* illustration on page 74 of the same idea on a pewter snuff-box.

show neat execution and a pretty taste in colour.

*Shoes.*—Among the shoe operatives of Staffordshire the making of small snuff-boxes in the form of shoes has been a hobby for nearly two centuries, and even when the use of snuff was discontinued, the making of snuff-boxes still went on, and even at the present day a last-maker will, in his spare time, gratify his artistic feelings by instinctively working up any odd bit of wood into the likeness of a shoe or boot. The interest in a collection of "shoe boxes" lies in the fact that they are almost always models of the prevailing fashion of the time when they were made, and a complete collection gives a good opportunity for tracing the evolution of foot-gear over a large period. Some of the eighteenth century specimens are most beautifully made, tiny brass or steel buckles being attached in their proper positions; others though without actual buckles have them indicated by cut steel studs placed closely together; others are piqué in ornamental designs with tiny brass pins, not only on the soles, where the pins might be held to represent nailing, but also on the uppers, a device which, while it detracts somewhat from the verisimilitude adds to the attractive appearance. A collector of these boxes should equip himself for the pursuit by acquiring a general knowledge of the different styles of footwear in vogue at various periods, as naturally the earlier boxes are scarcer and more worthy of attention. Preference should, of course, be given to those showing perfection of finish, particularly in the manner of forming the lid. Some are

## PLATE 6.

## QUAINT SNUFF-BOXES.

1. Wooden Shoe ornamented with small cut-steel buckle.  
18th Century.
2. Wooden Box painted red and decorated with gilt pattern.
3. Ivory Box, decorated with piqué work.
4. Snuff-box in the form of a bellows carved out of wood.

*Victoria and Albert Museum.*

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rather roughly made in this respect, the tiny hollow being closed merely by a peg. The favourite lid consists of a thin piece of wood sliding in a groove, though some are hinged. These, however, seem to be the work of professionals rather than the amateur craftsmen who appear to have made most of the shoe snuff-boxes.

*Silver Boxes.*—These are, as a rule, of excellent workmanship and are often charming little objects; there are, however, comparatively few of them which possess personal touches to the same degree as the examples made of commoner material. Doubtless they were made by silversmiths in the ordinary course of trade, and being small and of little value they were often treated in a somewhat perfunctory way as far as decoration was concerned. Their hinges and fastenings are almost always beautifully made and still work well, though a century and a half or more has passed since they were made. Of exceptional richness of decoration are those of Chippendale days, when the modified Rococo was the mode. On these elegant trifles the inconsequent mixture of shellwork, fabulous birds and other “orts and ends,” which were the elements from which the designers of the time formed endless combinations, seem quite in keeping with their frivolous purpose. These boxes are often irregular in outline, such being the fashion of the day. The hall-mark, maker and the date letter of course follow the usual sequence, and where these are clearly stamped, the provenance and the exact date can be determined by turning them

up in any of the usual books of reference. Unfortunately snuff-boxes, from being constantly handled and rubbed in the pocket, are peculiarly subject to wear, and very often the hall-mark is partially obliterated, making identification impossible. In many cases also, they were too small to have been thought worthy of being marked, for though large pieces were obliged to receive the stamp, those of less than five pennyweights were exempt. In such cases the collector must judge of the period by the decoration; they are, however, of less pecuniary value, though equally attractive from an artistic standpoint. In the middle of the eighteenth century Rococo and Chinoiserie were fashionable. About 1770 a more severe style was introduced, and a neat restrained design was considered far more elegant than the meaningless sprawling scrolls in which the decadent Rococo was ending its days. After 1795 the "wriggled" and "bright cut" form of decoration was almost universally used on minor silver work. It was easy to do, being produced simply by a rocking movement of a special tool varied by the removal of small portions of the surface giving a faceted effect. Especially when new it had a very brilliant appearance, which had a strong appeal at a time when diamonds, paste, cut steel and other glittering ornaments had perverted the taste of the public from quieter styles. The designs are generally purely formal. Sometimes festoons and wreaths are worked out by means of "cuts" and dots and sometimes an urn is engraved in the centre of the top.



The lids of many boxes of this period are formed of a slice of pebble or semi-precious stone. When this is the case the space available for decoration is much curtailed, and rows of dots or wavy lines running round the sides are quite enough for the purpose.

It is impossible to give an account of all the different varieties of boxes, simply because every material that could be pressed into the service has been utilised and every kind of ornamentation has been applied to their decoration. While the collector of some things, such as knife handles or "Blue John," may enter a hundred curio-shops without meeting with a single example to add to his treasures, the snuff-box hunter has to harden his heart and reject the greater number of the boxes which are to be found among the stock of almost every antique dealer, simply because, though individually they may be quite pleasing, it is no use having a number of mediocre specimens with nothing distinctive about them.

To make up an interesting collection of these cheaper boxes, it is essential that though they may be of common material, rough workmanship and naïve design, each example must possess the merit of individuality and hold something of the personality of its maker or its user.

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## CHAPTER IV

### PEWTER SNUFF-BOXES

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**S**NUFF-BOXES made of this humble but beautiful alloy should most certainly be included in any representative collection. They are not too scarce, and not always prohibitive in price, but they are more difficult to meet with now than they were twenty-five years ago, and the prices have been steadily increasing.

The great producing centre for this kind of ware is said to have been Sheffield, and no doubt the Birmingham men may have contributed their share. I am always lost in admiration of the splendid workmanship shown in the making of the boxes themselves—and more so in the adjusting of the lids to the boxes—a point which depends so much on the care bestowed on the making of the hinge. In silver and in gold, it is far easier to fashion a hinge than in a soft alloy such as pewter, and it is easier to solder two pieces of hard metal than two pieces of pewter, however hard, which will fuse into a shapeless lump at a comparatively low heat, unless the worker is on the *qui-vive* perpetually. He has to be, otherwise he is face to face with failure at every

turn. The softness of the metal has been the inspiration of the workman all through. It has practically fixed the size of the boxes, and it had much to do with fixing the shape, and deciding the nature of the ornamentation where any is present at all.

The boxes are in the main rectangular, though in many the corners are trimmed off, sometimes very slightly, at others very much more, say  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. or so on each side. Others are oval, and boxes of this shape certainly seem to stand wear and tear remarkably well—for the hinge-line, which must be straight, acts as a strengthening girder across the top. Others again are pointed oval or vesica-shaped boxes, while some are circular. In these the hinge is generally very small and delicate.

In most of the boxes the angles formed by the lid and its sides and by the bottom and the sides are strengthened by a moulding which either forms part of the strip out of which the sides are made or else is soldered on afterwards. In others the sides, instead of being at right angles to the bottom and top are curved ( or angular  $\angle$  section and are made of one strip cast in this shape or of two narrow strips joined at the angle.

In order to compete successfully with snuff-boxes in other materials those in pewter were to a certain extent ornamented. The ornamentation was either structural, i.e. it formed part and parcel of the box, and the ornament was stamped, rolled, or cast on the strips of which the boxes were made, or it was produced separately and applied to the boxes when

they were finished. In others again, ornament was chased or engraved on the exterior surface, and in some rare cases etched in the metal. In all these cases the engraving or etching had to be done with the utmost care. The metal was so thin—being often less than half a millimetre—that a deep cut with a burin or a scraper would have interfered with the strength and rigidity of the lid.

Sometimes the boxes were gilded *inside*; outside, of course, it would have been useless. Transparent lacquer seems to have been used on some, judging from traces of it that linger in crevices and corners. Blue seems, as it was on tobacco-boxes, to have been the favourite colour.

One of the most curious snuff-boxes that I have met with was made of a rather hard alloy with an all-over design of no particular merit. It seemed rather difficult to explain, for it looked like a small cardboard box covered with a large patterned cretonne or wall-paper, but one day in the Victoria and Albert Museum I saw a curious helmet-shaped double bowl made on the principle of a hot-water dish, with screw complete. Mr. H. P. Mitchell, who was in charge of the Department, seemed to think that the pewter sheet had been used for the roller-printing of some fabric. That would certainly explain the birth of the design, but it does not satisfactorily account for what is a very commonplace and distinctly ugly snuff-box.

In the case of spoons, plates, candlesticks, one is accustomed to look for, and generally to find, the

mark which formed the distinctive badge or sign of the pewterer who made the ware.

In snuff-boxes it is quite the exception to find any identification mark whatever. On spoons the marks in the bowl (the only place by the way where it was possible to impress a mark) were very diminutive in size. On snuff-boxes it would not have been impossible to impress marks, but it would have been difficult as the steel punch requires a really hard blow to give a good impression on the pewter. Snuff-boxes are a very hard alloy as a rule (approximating almost to Ashberry metal or a hard Britannia metal with about 2 per cent. of zinc), and would have required a much harder blow in consequence. Therefore, and partly because the boxes were not the work of ordinary pewterers, the marks are absent. Pewter being a comparatively soft metal, it was found necessary to recess the ornament on the lid when the ornament was at all elaborate. It was a common-sense method, and thanks to it we are able to see ornaments which would have been illegible to-day if the simple protection of a rim had been omitted.

As to the date of snuff-boxes, we must remember that in the main snuff-taking took the place of tobacco smoking in the period that, more or less loosely, is termed Georgian. This does not necessarily exclude the last few years of the reign of Queen Anne, and it may include part of the reign of William IV. Roughly, we may take the snuff-box era to be that of the eighteenth century.

We cannot in the case of snuff-boxes, as we can in the case of candlesticks and tankards and other silver ware, take a silver box and from our examination of it, ascribe an exact date to its humbler copy in pewter. The two arts in this did not just go upon all fours together.

Among the snuff-boxes, as in other branches of bric-à-brac, we find eccentricities, if not absurdities. There are grotesque masks, portraits of a snub-nosed person, probably meant for Silenus or Bacchus, and there are many extant, and in various sizes, of the favourite subject.

The illustration shows it fairly well. Viewed the right way up the legend gives THE WEDDING DAY, and the happy pair seem as delighted with themselves as they are with each other. The box when reversed gives a picture of the pair, sadly disillusioned, THREE WEEKS AFTER MARRIAGE. The adaptation of the reversible faces, with the reversed head-gear, the hair, etc., is extremely clever and worthier of a better subject.

Another form which was popular for a time was that of a lady's slipper—with a very rounded heel and a very pointed toe. They are not very common, and it does not seem to be an ideal shape for a box into which a finger and a thumb had to be inserted for the extraction of the snuff. It can hardly have been the general custom, as it was that of a former professor at Oxford, to snuff up the snuff direct from the box without the intervention of the finger and thumb. If it was so—well, let us say, "*autre*

*temps, autres mœurs,*” and for the change let us be truly thankful.

Another fanciful device was the pistol snuff-box. In this the lid was formed by making the end of the barrel near the trigger open. In this again fashion no doubt was to blame for a freakish design—for it is neither beautiful nor practical in any way.

As far as is known to the writer, there was no development of pewter snuff-boxes along objectionable lines. The metal did not lend itself to secret compartments and spring recesses in which secrets of any kind could be concealed. Neither was it suitable for decoration with enamel, which required firing in a muffle, nor for the delicate touch of the miniature painter, though ivory panels could have been inserted in some of the lids.

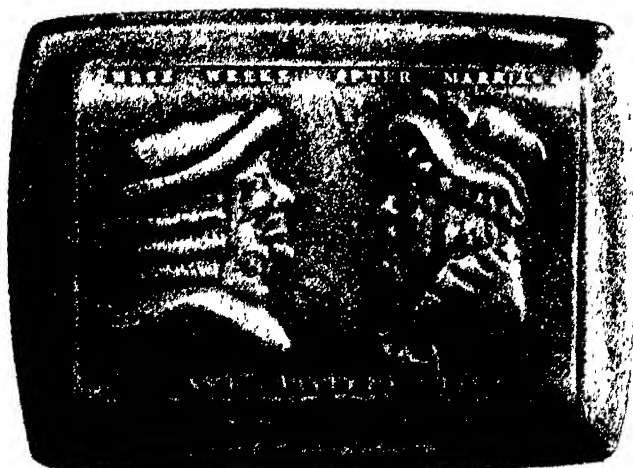
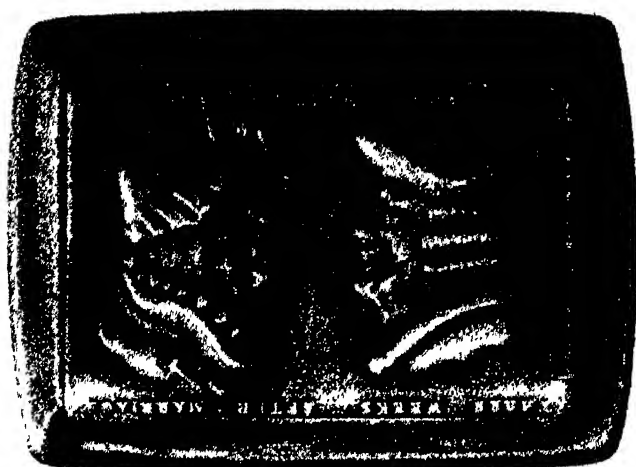
The possessor of a dozen or so of snuff-boxes would be well advised to display them on a tray or in a small glass-covered case. It is not fair to put twenty or thirty or more in a bowl, all higgledy-piggledy, and let them jostle and be jostled every time one of them is taken out of the bowl. The wear of the most inveterate snuff-taker's pocket would not be as hard as this.

## PLATE 7.

PEWTER SNUFF-BOX. LATE 18TH CENTURY.

The same Snuff-box reproduced twice to show that by reversing it the picture is entirely changed.







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## CHAPTER V

### SNUFFERS AND SNUFFER TRAYS

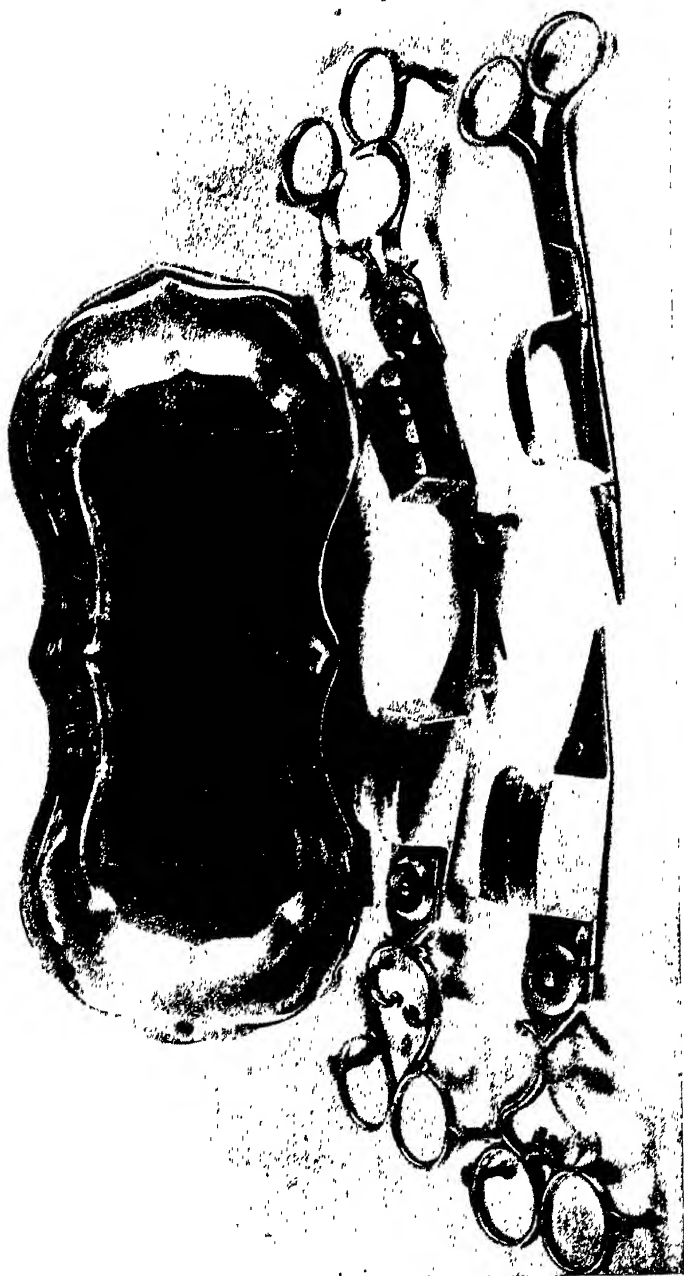
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**S**NUFFERS and douters, the former for trimming the wick of a tallow candle, and the latter for putting out the light quickly and completely without creating a disagreeable smell, are worth considering as collectors' items. The earliest known example of snuffers in the National Museums of which we have any record is a pair made of silver which is in the British Museum. This pair is enamelled with the arms of Henry VIII. and the date assigned is 1514. Mr. Edward Bidwell, who made a collection of snuffers on historical lines, exhibited at Hastings some years ago iron snuffers with and without covers, which he attributed to Tudor times. The earliest known examples of snuffers, made without feet, to drop into an upright stand, were of brass and are sometimes known as Stuart snuffers. There are a few excellent examples of the type, in silver, in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington. The earliest example there bears the London hall-mark of 1696-7.

Many snuffers were made in steel, plain polished, and fewer are to be met with damascened, these last not infrequently French and often beautifully orna-

## PLATE 8.

BRASS SNUFFERS AND TRAY.





mented. Brass was also commonly used for snuffers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Close plating was also used by the snuffer-makers, particularly during the best Old Sheffield Plate period. Mr. Frederick Bradbury, in his "History of Old Sheffield Plate," illustrates no fewer than fourteen examples of snuffers, and gives a list of patents—thirty-three in all—granted in respect of this utensil. Most of these patents relate to what are known as "eccentric" snuffers, and the devices cover a period from 1749 to 1844. The idea behind all these special designs is to provide a means of pushing the severed part away into the box recess and of securing the extinction of the spark.

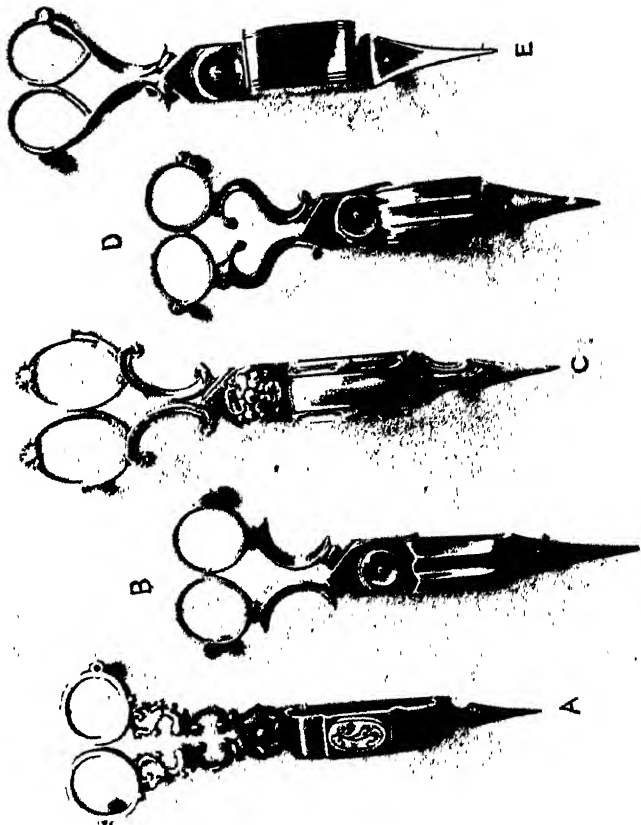
The making of snuffers is practically a lost art, but there are probably hundreds of pairs hidden away in the drawers of old-established ironmongers and silversmiths. An enquiry sent during the war to the only known surviving maker in Birmingham for a single pair, elicited the information that the making of snuffers had been abandoned. By the kind offices of a trade paper the want was made known to its readers, and within a fortnight several gross were offered at prices ranging from 4*d.* each for a plain cast-iron article finished japanned to beautifully made examples in polished steel for which as much as half a guinea was asked. The offers came from places as far apart as Truro and Aberdeen. The incident proved how widespread was the use of snuffers and how completely the braided wick wax candle drove the "old dip" out of the field.

## PLATE 9.

## SNUFFERS.

- A. Pair of steel snuffers with the box engraved, fitted with solid silver bows. Late 18th Century.
- B. Pair of brass snuffers. Victorian.
- C. Pair of close plated silver snuffers for use on a Sheffield plated tray. *c.* 1820.
- D. Pair of brass snuffers. Probably early 18th Century.
- E. Pair of steel snuffers. Victorian.







From many points of view the snuffers trays were more artistic articles than the instrument which rested upon them. The simplest form was the japanned tray which went with the cast-iron snuffers. Most of the brass trays are stamped, and occasionally one may pick up a *papier mâché* tray, with mother-of-pearl inlay. This class was commonly decorated in primary colours which became nicely toned by age and use. From a collector's point of view, however, no snuffer-trays can compare with those in silver and Old Sheffield Plate. In the last-mentioned material nearly every detail of a fascinating craft which has completely died out may be studied in a series of typical examples. Piercing, chasing, the use and application of the gadroon, the utilisation of masks, shells and fancy wires, the soldering in of the silver shield, the foot in all its forms and variations, and what was known as the upright border, are all to be found in miniature in these little narrow trays, many of which are of great beauty. The Sheffield makers did not greatly affect the variety with the flat handle midway on one of the long sides, probably because, in such case, their methods of construction involved two thin silver scales and loading with lead. This meant a tray but imperfectly balanced, and the best examples of handled trays are always of solid silver.

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## CHAPTER VI

### CANDLESTICKS

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**B**EFORE the seventeenth century indoor lighting was carried out by means of either lamps or candles, except in the case of very large halls where torches could be used. In the days of antiquity the use of lamps appears to have been customary, but from the Middle Ages on, the superior convenience of candles was generally recognised. Wax from the combs of the honey-bee was always considered the ideal substance from which to make them, and the alternative of tallow was a very much despised cheap substitute. The primitive method of making candles was to immerse the wick repeatedly in this melted grease or wax, leaving it to cool in between; each time a coating adhered and the candle gradually assumed the required size. Even as late as fifteen years ago the smaller farmers of the Welsh mountains used to make "dips" by this method, using as a wick the pith of the rushes which grow in the bogs; these were peeled with the exception of a narrow strip of green skin left for strengthening the brittle pith.

These were burnt in ingenious iron holders which

had no socket but gripped the dip in the jaws and held it in position by a weight, as these lights had not enough "backbone" to keep them upright in a socket. Some of the more elaborate holders had an extinguisher attached which must have been useful. These dips smell bad enough when burning, but when blown out they are indescribable. Some of these holders date possibly from the seventeenth century, but the bulk are, I think, of eighteenth and early nineteenth century date. Probably the more ornamental specimens, especially those with tripod stands, were made from about 1760 to 1800, but it is quite impossible to give anything like an exact date to such things; the village blacksmiths who made them were men in whom tradition was strong and originality weak, so that the grandson worked exactly as his grandfather did fifty years before. They were peasants working for peasants. These rushholders have little artistic merit and are not very rare in country districts, but the collection of the various types is exceedingly interesting and it is well that such "by-gones" should be rescued before they become simply a memory. Single examples, however, are not very desirable additions to the ordinary collection of candlesticks; they are so simple and naïve that they do not harmonise with their surroundings.

Wax candles were long made by the dipping method, but moulds were also used, especially for the superior qualities. They were also made in moulds for ecclesiastical use, and in the wood of the moulds figures of saints and other religious emblems were carved. An

example is to be seen at the British Museum. A very weak point about all old candles was their wick; this, as the wax burnt away, remained charred but unconsumed in an ever-lengthening "snuff." The invention which turned the wick over into the hot part of the flame, whereby it burnt away, is a comparatively modern one.

The use of candles for actually lighting a room, so that various occupations could be carried on, whether sedentary employment, such as reading or card playing, or for feasting and dancing, was naturally an expensive luxury and for the most part confined to the Court and the rich merchant class. The lower orders, perforce more economical, either obeyed the precept "early to bed and early to rise" or contented themselves with the flickering light of wood-fires supplemented by a few tallow candles, placed just where they were wanted to give their light to any person who had special need of it. Floating wicks in oil were also used, and for very fine work, such as lace working, ingenious glass bulbs filled with water were used for concentrating the light.

The greater number of mediæval candlesticks which have survived were intended for ecclesiastical use, and are of the richest variety. In these there is no socket, the candle being held upright by means of a pin which is forced into its base. These candlesticks are still made for use in churches, for which purpose they are quite convenient, a special point being that they can be used for a great variety of sizes of candles. This was useful when candles were a

favourite offering at shrines and churches and, as they were often brought by pilgrims from different parts of the country, there was no uniformity. Naturally the number of "prickets" now made is very small, as for domestic use the self-fitting candle has almost superseded all others.

Early examples of English church candlesticks are so extremely rare that they are unlikely to come in the way of the ordinary collector, who will do well to confine his ambitions to the domestic kinds, and among these he will find an enormous variety of shapes and material. The earliest that he is likely to come across are those of seventeenth century date. These are mostly of brass, pewter, silver and wood. There is a certain family likeness between all those made of metal, though different methods of manufacture were employed in the case of each of the precious and non-precious metals.

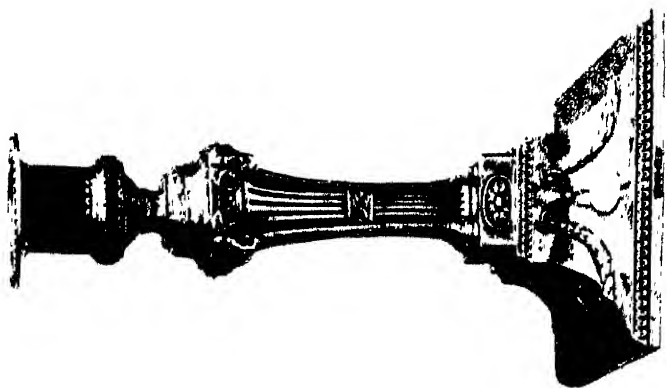
Many of the domestic metal candlesticks which have survived from the reigns of James I. and Charles I. are of a most curious shape, recalling an inverted drinking cup of the chalice type with an added tubular socket. The resemblance is so very striking that it seems exceedingly probable that the custom, before "sticks" of this type came into use, was to use an actual cup turned upside down. That the candlesticks were not, however, made out of vessels formerly used for drinking purposes is proved by the position of the hall-mark on the silver specimens, which is placed in a position where it would be wrong side up if the base had been intended for a drinking cup.

## PLATE 10.

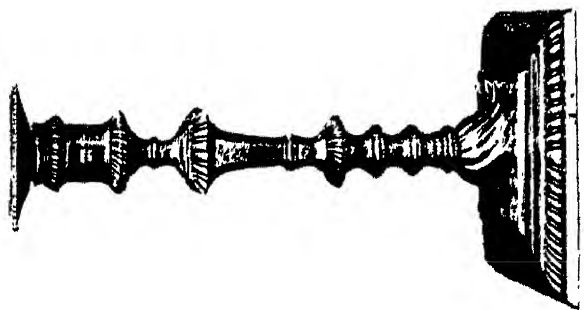
## CANDLESTICKS.

1. "Chippendale" candlestick. Silver, 1767.
2. "Baluster" candlestick. Silver, 1762.
3. Typical "Adam" candlestick. Silver, 1774.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*

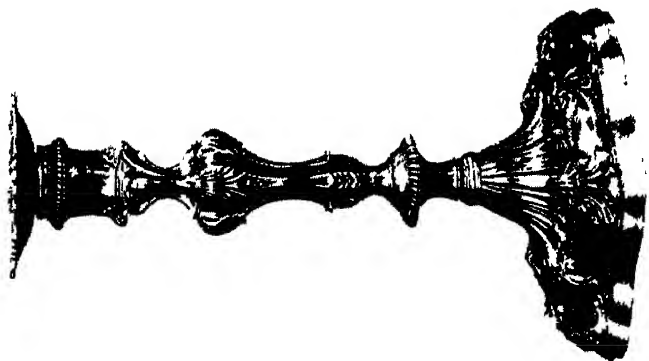




3



2



1



These candlesticks are rare in any metal, but they are most usually of pewter and some are of silver. As a rule the models for pewter objects were their silver contemporaries, from which moulds were taken in which the pewter was cast and subsequently turned on a lathe to thin it down to the required dimensions. Varieties of candlesticks have thus been preserved which reproduce silver shapes of which the originals are now entirely wanting or exceedingly rare. Of course these bell-based 'sticks, even in pewter, are most uncommon and are a great prize for the collector. The few examples that we have seen in brass were in very poor condition, oxydisation of the metal having produced a good deal of pitting on the surface.

The next development is much more shapely and has a more uniform appearance ; the part that represented the foot of the inverted cup has become a grease-tray half-way down a columnal candle-holder. It originally had its uses in intercepting the melted grease or wax which was apt to run down and soil furniture, though this function cannot have been well carried out when the saucer-like grease-tray was arranged so that the concave side was downwards. Those with the tray thus arranged are probably later specimens. In none of these candlesticks is there a movable nozzle, which was a later addition introduced to facilitate the removal of a burnt-out candle end. Some of the grease-tray candlesticks have a sliding knob about half-way down which pushes up the bottom of the socket, while in others there is a wire running through a cork in the base which answers the same purpose of

forcing out the remains of the wax. These varieties are more common in brass and silver than in pewter, though in any metal they are scarce. Probably they were made in quite large numbers in pewter, but the thin out-standing tray would, in the soft metal, soon get damaged and then the candlestick would be handed to some travelling pewterer, who would melt it down and remodel it into a later fashion. Even in brass and silver these models have often suffered severely, and it needs an artist's hand to restore them to their former shape, and it is, as a rule, just as well not to attempt any repair unless the services of a real expert in old metalwork can be obtained ; the ordinary silver-smith or local ironmonger being much more likely to make matters worse than to improve them. However, in a battered state one can still trace the hand of the old-world craftsman at work and they are always worth acquiring. The typical brass candlestick of the Jacobean period has a large grease-tray half-way down and a small socket ; it is turned out of solid metal and is heavy for its size.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century silver candlesticks appear to have been made in fair numbers, though they are now decidedly rare and a candlestick with a date mark before 1700 is a valuable possession. They (and the pewter ones made after the silver model) generally had square or octagonal bases supporting a round or rectangular fluted column. There is a kind of small inverted "grease-tray" above the foot. These candlesticks are seldom of great height and appear somewhat squat when empty, and to show them to

full advantage in a collection, it is as well to keep candles in them.\* Cast stems of the baluster type with hammered bases were also creeping into use at the end of Charles II.'s reign, but they were not largely made till the eighteenth century. These early ones almost always have square or octagonal feet. In the seventeenth century turned wood was used for candlesticks, and many of these of walnut with spiral twists may be referred to the Restoration period, but they are hard to date, as there is little to identify them by; turners being rather an unimaginative race and apt to follow the fashions of a bygone date and use any model which takes their fancy at the moment. The most helpful thing is to compare the general design with table legs and balusters of which the period is known.

Early in the eighteenth century the last relics of the grease-tray went out of fashion and a cast stem of a slighter and more graceful type came into use. The base is often round or octagonal with even sides, as such shapes were steadier in proportion to the space covered than squares. So many of these "standing candlesticks" were made for use on card tables that this was an important matter. Curiously the wooden reserves on the tables for them to stand on are not octagonal but always square or round, generally the latter.

The brass candlesticks of the reigns of Anne and George I. and II. are exceedingly numerous and very

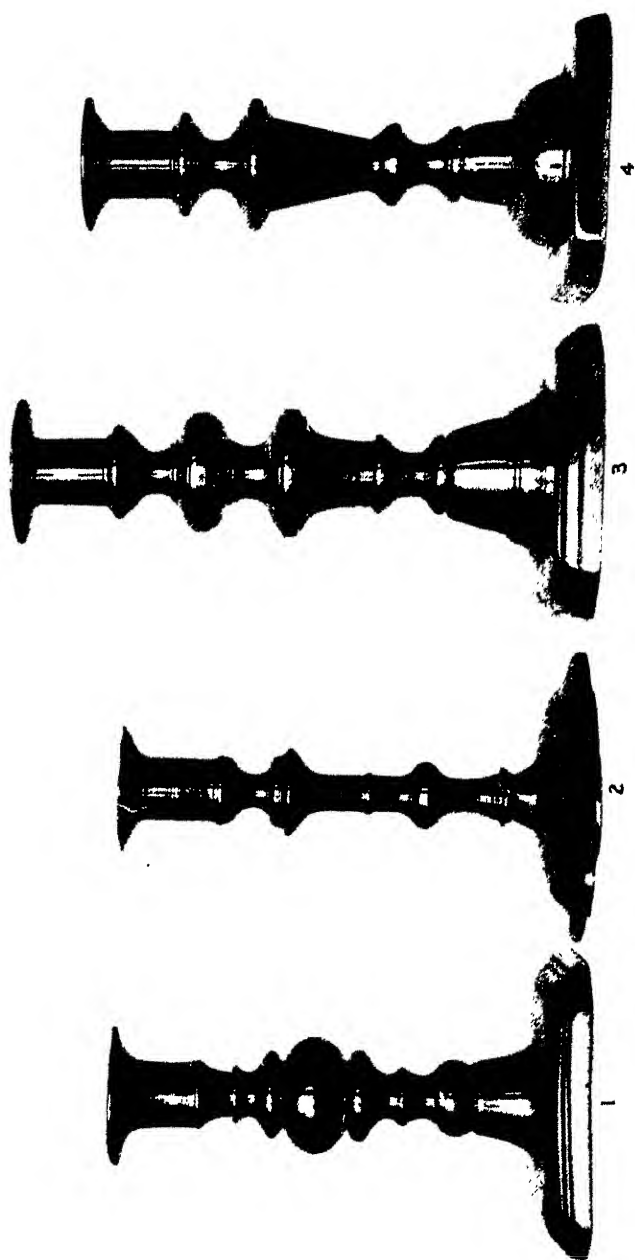
\* Those made for church use of a dull yellowy wax are most like those used in contemporary times.

## PLATE II.

## CANDLESTICKS.

Four Brass Candlesticks. 1, 2, and 3 date from the 18th Century, and 4 from the early years of the 19th Century.

*Victoria and Albert Museum.*







delightful. They have broad stands and turned or cast upright stems, and one never tires of their pleasantly shaped stems and well-proportioned bases. They generally have movable nozzles and are well-finished and strongly made, and as a rule remain in good order in spite of two hundred years of usefulness. They are quite the most decorative of brass candlesticks and take their places as of right among "old blue" on oak or walnut furniture. A few early eighteenth century brass 'sticks are of plain columnar shape on a very high domed base which strongly recalls the feet of some early drinking-glasses.

Throughout the eighteenth century the baluster-shaped stem remained in fashion for brass and pewter and also for many silver specimens. In silver, however, the idea was very elaborately worked out and instead of the simple round mouldings we find elaborate chased work with ribs and flutes and gadrooned rims. These, which may be called "Chippendale" candlesticks, represent the English Rococo which was rendered so popular by the genius of the great cabinet maker. Contemporary with some of these are the classical patterns which were made fashionable by the Adam Brothers. The column pattern in use for silver at this end of the seventeenth century is recalled in many cases, but in taller proportions and of more finicky workmanship. Unlike their predecessors, they look better without candles, those with the urn or vase, which often forms the socket, being hardly improved in appearance by the addition of a wax cylinder issuing from it. These classical column shapes in one form

or another bring us to the end of the eighteenth century and were followed by the ordinary florid over-ornate style which characterises so much early nineteenth century silver. Sheffield plate candlesticks, though this method of simulating silver ware was not invented till 1742, are to be found in designs of earlier period, for instance "Queen Anne" patterns were often copied, so that the date of Sheffield 'sticks can be more readily ascertained by the methods of manufacture rather than by design. The earlier ones are made in rather a rough way, evidences of the tooling, etc., being easily seen. One method used was to take pieces of plated metal and solder these into tubes and afterwards model them into the required shape by swaging. Appliances were few in the early workshops and there are many signs of hand work. The silver is very thick on this early plate and they are often in surprisingly good condition. They were fairly expensive. Horace Walpole bought a pair in 1760; he says they were "rather pretty" and gave two guineas for them. This seems a high price as things were at that time, but the value of silver was then much higher than now.

Later the greater part of the work was carried out by means of dies. These appliances, though initially expensive, made the work much more expeditious and, of course, cheaper; the plating also is generally much thinner. Stamped mounts of extremely thin silver were filled with lead and used as ornaments. These are often rather overdone, giving a tawdry appearance. Small "sticks" are often made on a telescopic principle

whereby their height can be extended two or three inches. This was probably done so that the candle could be kept at about the same level, but it does not seem very useful. The screw arrangement inside, by which this is carried out, is made by hand and must have added considerably to the cost. Perhaps the happiest efforts of the Sheffield plater in the way of candlesticks are those made from about 1765 on in the shape of Ionic columns with richly ornamented bases and capitals; they are generally well-proportioned and the work of competent craftsmen.

As during the eighteenth century candlesticks were such an important item in the furnishing of a room, it is natural that many materials should be used for them besides the ordinary brass, pewter and silver. Some of the most interesting are those of Battersea enamel made in the middle of the century and the opaque glass candlesticks made at Bristol; these were both decorated in much the same way, with slight detached sprays of flowers, and at first sight those of glass closely resemble those of enamel, but the outline of the enamel on metal is never so crisp and well-cut as that of the white blown enamel glass.

The material of Bristol Enamel glass is very similar to that used in coating the metal for enamels such as Battersea, but, of course, it is used in a totally different way. Enamel glass objects are made by blowing the glass while in a soft condition, while in the case of enamel on a metal ground or core the glass is ground to a powder and mixed with water or mucilage to a paste. In this form it is applied to the foundation

(generally of copper) and submitted to great heat in a muffle furnace, subsequently decoration can be painted and fired at a slightly lower temperature in the same way that designs are applied to porcelain.

During the last third of the eighteenth century many candlesticks were decorated with cut-glass drops or "lustres." French chandeliers of this kind are often of extreme beauty and elaboration. Though English glass was far superior to Continental glass in fire and brilliancy as well as purity of metal, their lustres were not so famous as the French. Many beautiful candelabra and branched candlesticks were, however, hung with cut-glass lustres. Some of these are of ormolu and bronze, but the majority are of cut glass. A great deal of the interest depends on the character of the metalwork, which in many of the later examples is very commonplace. Some of the ormolu candlesticks are further ornamented with mounts of Wedgwood's jasper ware, the effect of the combination of the blue and white pottery with the glitter of the cut glass and the metallic brilliancy of the ormolu being very happy. The mark on the Wedgwood is, of course, not visible in the ordinary way, but there is a nut and screw which holds the whole thing together, and when this is undone the mark can be found on the base of the cylindrical or vase-shaped mount. This is important, as modern imitations which superficially resemble the old ware are still made. The cut-glass drops of almost all good lustres are pear-shaped and comparatively small, the

triangular drops with an arrow-shaped point belong to the Victorian era. Some early drops are rather flat with six sides, but the pear shape is preferable.

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## CHAPTER VII

### KNIVES AND KNIFE-HANDLES

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**I**N mediæval times knife-handles were favourite objects for the display of delicate workmanship in various crafts. Gold and silversmith's work, ivory carving, and enamel were all used to ornament the hafts of knives, spoons and, occasionally, forks. Examples of this class are however so extremely rare and costly, and are so very unlikely to come in the way of the ordinary collector, that he had better resign himself to admiring them without any hope of possession.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, knives and other table implements, instead of being carried by the owner to banquets and feasts, were provided by the host, and as large numbers were required, naturally they were made of less expensive materials and of less elaborate workmanship. They are nevertheless often extremely pretty, and a most interesting and uncommon collection may be formed of them. The most frequent materials are ivory (white or stained green), horn, bone, silver, earthenware or porcelain. Some collectors confine themselves entirely to ceramic specimens, but the whole range is very

interesting, and as they are not easy to discover in any material, it is perhaps better to include all kinds.

These knives were almost invariably made with forks (prongs) in pairs or in sets of a dozen of each. Silver spoons with handles *en suite* were less generally made, in fact after the seventeenth century they were quite exceptional. As a rule soup and broth appear to have been supped from a bowl without the aid of a spoon. Forks and spoons entirely of silver were made at the same time as their ornamental handled contemporaries, though such forks were comparatively rare in the seventeenth century.

The sets are often found in their old cases, the earlier ones generally being of shagreen, either black or green, with brass mounts of irregular outline similar to those used on the cabinet work of the same date. Later the boxes are more usually made of wood, invariably of fine finish and workmanship.

*Silver knife-handles* are generally of what is known as the pistol shape, the end turning over in a similar way to those weapons. They are exceedingly difficult to date, as it is rare to find either a maker's mark or a date letter on them, the reason being there is so little silver in them that they were under the weight at which all silver things had to be hall-marked. There is generally very little in the way of ornament about them beyond a little scrollwork on the "butt," but the whole shape is generally so well balanced and the proportions of haft and blade so correct that they are very pleasing objects.

These knives cannot have been very costly, yet they

were only provided in the homes of the well-to-do until quite late in the eighteenth century, the humbler members of society continuing to follow the custom of their forefathers and carrying a caseknife with them, each for his own personal use.

An interesting entry in Mrs. Papendieck's diary relates to these details of table equipment at the end of the eighteenth century. This lady was of considerable social standing, two of her brothers being Gentlemen in Waiting to George IV. On her marriage in 1783, she received from the Queen "a case of plate which contained cruets, salt-cellars, candlesticks, and spoons of various sizes, silver forks not being then used: also six large and six small knives and forks, to which Mamma added six more of each and a carving-knife and fork." Writing of 1788, Mrs. Papendieck says, "Silver forks were only used by the nobility and foreign ambassadors, but silver-handled knives and forks were some times seen and more often ivory and bone-handles."

The silver is generally a mere shell hardly thicker than writing-paper and is filled with shellac or pitch. The handles are very easily damaged by being allowed to fall on a tiled floor and are extremely difficult to repair. They were stamped in two sections and soldered together, the tang of the blade being held by the cement filling, into which it was forced while hot. The shape of the blade was generally curved at the top and was used to convey food to the mouth such as "peas and the juice of fruit tarts" (to quote Mrs. Papendieck again), the two-pronged fork being of



small assistance when it came to eating these elusive comestibles.

At the end of the eighteenth century *Sheffield plate handles* were made, but not in large numbers; the labour involved in making them was as great if not greater than when the precious metal itself was employed, and as so little silver was used, it was hardly worth while to make use of the substitute.

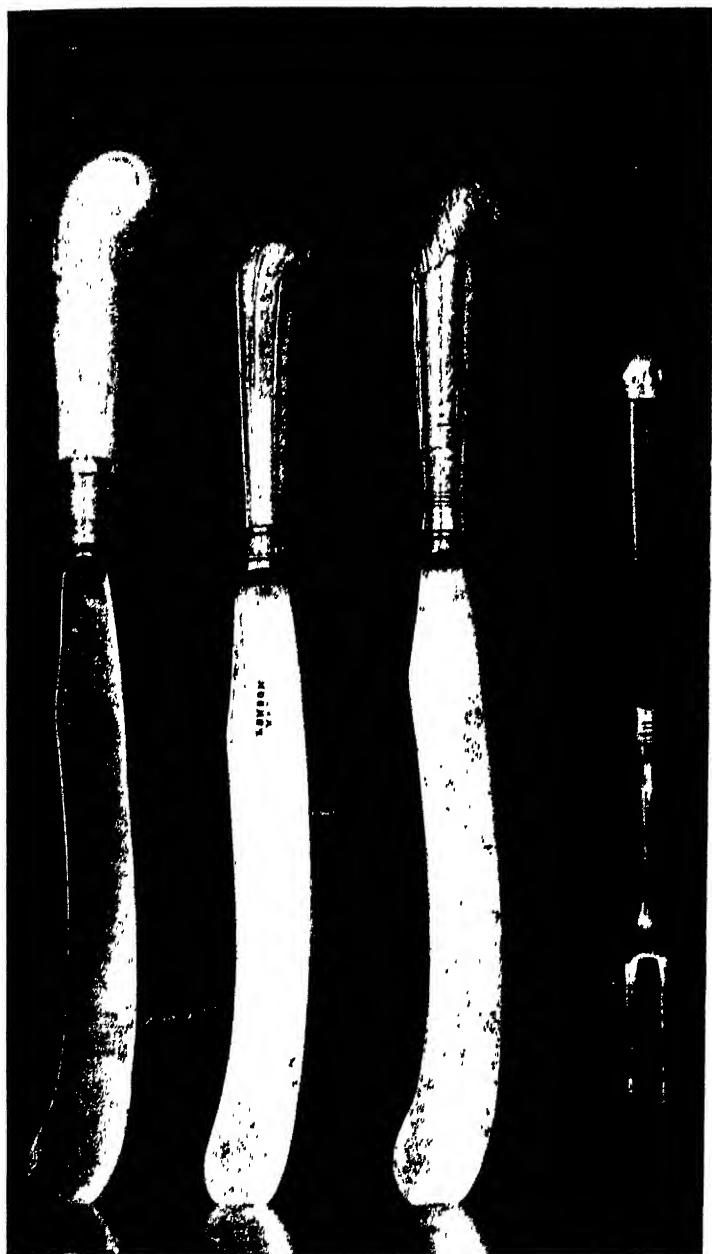
The *Ceramic handles* are certainly the most interesting section, as there are so many varieties and each handle presents a fresh problem that requires solving. The first factory to make porcelain handles appears to have been Meissen (Dresden), and they were made there as early as 1720. These hafts are very delicately ornamented with slightly raised designs and with daintily painted floral decoration. They were followed by almost all the Continental china factories, the ware of course varying according to the characteristics of the different works. It is a peculiarity of old Continental knives that their blades taper to a point and are not rounded as are the majority of English ones.

Meissen was copied by Bow and Chelsea. Many examples of Bow handles are known in numerous patterns. The most usual kind is all white with a raised spray of prunes as its sole decoration. Another pattern is also plain white of Rococo design, and for these the original moulds have been dug up on the site of the factory. Like so much Bow porcelain, many of them are much discoloured owing to the glaze having perished. The relief of the pattern

## PLATE 12.

## KNIVES AND FORK.

1. Green ivory and silver. *c.* 1775.
- 2 and 3. Silver handles of very thin metal filled with pitch.  
*c.* 1780.
4. Handle of White Bow Porcelain.



1

2

3

4



varies considerably, in some of the handles it is so slight that it is difficult to trace the details. Handles were also made at Bow of white porcelain with blue decoration, and as this factory specialised in useful domestic ware, doubtless many sets of knives were made to match the dinner services.

Chelsea also made knife hafts, but no record has been kept of their design, and as far as I am aware none has been identified as emanating from this factory, though they were evidently made in considerable numbers. The earliest mention of them that I have come across is in an advertisement in *The Public Advertiser*—"To be sold by auction by Mr. Ford at his great Room in St. James's Haymarket this" (Dec. 17, 1754) "and the following day all the entire stock of Chelsea Porcelain Toys consisting of snuffboxes Smelling Bottles and Trinkets for watches (mounted in Gold and unmounted in various beautiful shapes of an elegant design and curiously painted in Enamel) a large parcel of Knife hafts etc. Most of the above in lots suitable for Jewellers Goldsmiths Toyshops and Shops and workmen in various branches of business."

It is always difficult for those who are not experts to identify unmarked china (and even for *them* it is not an easy task), and in the case of knife hafts it is doubly hard, as they are so thick that it is impossible to get any information as to their texture by holding them up to the light. In looking for Chelsea hafts it must be remembered that it is a soft paste factory and there is always a certain mellowness in the glazed outline, and a soft richness in the touch and colouring of

this beautiful English ware. Though if found they will almost surely be unmarked, it is quite possible they may be identified by belonging to a dinner service which is marked.

Lord Ilchester has pointed out that "a set of china for a table of thirty covers" including "knife and fork handles" of Dresden ware was lent to the Chelsea works to copy in 1751 by Henry Fox, afterwards Lord Holland (see *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. XX, page 361). Wedgwood made many varieties of knife handles, but these are of earthenware, not porcelain. He manufactured them in such numbers as to rouse the ire of the workers of Sheffield, who by the end of the eighteenth century had come to consider the making of them their special prerogative and proudly stamped "Sheffield-made Haft and Blade" as a hall-mark of excellence on their work, though "London-made" was also a much esteemed stamp. Their indignation does not seem to have affected Wedgwood much, as he continued to make his handles in large numbers, especially in agate ware, which, truth to tell, are in my opinion rather ugly; still the ware had a great vogue. His blue and white jasper ware handles are however charming and are extremely dainty-looking.

There are to be found some blue and white handles with extremely curved blades and silver mounts with a pinked-out edge. The ware of these appears to be Worcester, as the raised patterns are very similar to those on the well-known sauceboats; these however were made so much alike at different factories that it is difficult to speak decisively as to their provenance.

Willow transfer appears on some handles which may very well be Caughley, and we have seen a set of knives which were painted with the owner's crest to match a dinner set of Oriental armorial china. The interesting point is that the handles were of European ware, though decorated in a similar way.

*Green Ivory* is one of the most delightful materials used in making knife handles. The shade is generally that of brightish malachite and the veining of the ivory varies the local colour in a very charming way. These are almost always mounted with a silver rim and cap, the latter sometimes plain and sometimes in the shape of a shell, the shell-shaped cap being so arranged that it turns over to one side, giving the butt-handle effect which, if it had been carved out of solid ivory, would have wasted much material. The vogue lasted in England from the end of the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth. In one of the caricatures published by Carrington Bowles the table is shown laid with white crockery and green-handled cutlery with very good effect.

The stain used is a very permanent one and has been in use for hundreds of years. We have seen a little casket of Certosina work of the late fifteenth century in which this same shade of green ivory is employed and the colour is still fresh and bright. Its use in this connection was probably introduced into England at the end of the seventeenth century from Holland, the same tint being often used in the Dutch marquetry work of which so much was imported.

*Handles of Agate* were used in England in the seven-

teenth and eighteenth centuries; they were generally drilled right through and the tang fastened to a cap at the end; early ones are often octagonal or hexagonal in section, they are also sometimes of the pistol-butt shape. Pepys has an entry under date November 20, 1663: "Bought me an aggate hafted knife which cost me 5s." By Pepys's day the knives even at large banquets were most usually provided by the guest, and his entry on August 29 is of interest on this point: "My Lord Mayor's day. Sir Anthony Bateman. At noon I went forth by coach to Guildhall. Many were the tables but none in the Hall but the Mayor's that had napkins or knives which was strange."

Although the most attractive part of these old knives is their handle, it is a great pity to remove the blade, providing it is the old one. The shape and colour of the steel sets off the different texture and tints of the porcelain, ivory or whatever material of which the ornamental part consists. If sets can be obtained, it is of course well to have the original cases or, if this is a counsel of perfection, contemporary knife boxes should be used for their display. Single specimens look well in drawers arranged either according to their material or chronologically, as may be preferred. Knives and prongs of one pattern should be kept together, not divided, and prongs should be put into their place in the sequence according to their handles. When opportunity occurs it is well to have both large and small sizes of each pattern, though it is much more difficult to find the small knives than the larger ones. We used to think that this was because the smaller sizes were more



used and therefore wore out first, but a family jeweller of great experience in repairing old plate, who numbered among his customers many historic families, said to me on this point, that he had noticed that the sets with small knives always came to him from houses where they had been heirlooms, so it is we think a fair assumption that they were a refinement reserved at first for the upper classes, while the middle-class people contented themselves with the larger size only.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### BELLARMINES

"With jugs, mugs and pitchers, and bellarmines of state."

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IT is somewhat strange that at a time when England's home productions (such, for example, as the ironwork of Sussex) were justly held in high repute, the potter's art should have been at so low an ebb that we had to import stoneware from the Netherlands and Germany. This earthenware, the so-called "stoneware," taking its name from its hardness and colour, included the Bellarmine, Greybeard (or Bartman), and was generally known under its first appellation. The earliest notice we have of this importation is in the "Lansdowne MSS.," which records in the year 1581 "the potts made at Cullein (Cologne) called drinking stone potts, were first imported into England by Garrett Tynes of Akon or Acon (Aix-la-Chapelle), who had previously supplied the Low Countries." \*

The reason for their introduction is not difficult to trace; they replaced not only the rudely potted jugs and pitchers, but also to some extent the wooden and leathern vessels that were in common use in

\* "A History of Pottery and Porcelain," by Joseph Marryat (1859).

taverns and households. So successful was the exportation of stoneware to England that when the Spanish tyranny drove so many good artificers from the Netherlands and Low Countries, many potters fled to this country, carrying on their craft here.

The Bellarmine was made in various sizes, the *little pot* (a pint), the pot (a quart), the pottle pot (two quarts), the galloner (a gallon), and larger sizes. In form a Bellarmine is narrow-necked, furnished with a handle attached to the neck, the circular or oval body or belly of the vessel being protruded to obtain the requisite holding capacity, and narrowing to its base. These jugs, or pitchers if we may so call them, vary in colour, some being of a mottled brown, while others are almost of a grey stone hue. The former predominate, and are to be preferred, the deep rich colour and glazing being in harmony with its form, and perhaps we may add with its period.

Every true Bellarmine is ornamented with an impressed mask (a face with a long beard) placed immediately below the ornamental bands of the lip of the vessel, and frequently with an additionally impressed decoration on the swelling body beneath the mask—a coat-of-arms or a symbol.

Mr. A. G. Wright, Curator of Colchester Museum, states: "Bellarmines appear to have been packed in the saggars mouth downwards—as the bases of all those I have examined show a more or less circular mark, distinct from the semi-circular lines of the 'cut off.' One specimen in the Colchester Museum shows the glaze running from the body of the vessel

down the neck—which could not have happened if the flagons had been baked in their proper upright position.”

The decorative work is supposed to have been executed to order, sometimes appertaining to the place of origin of the Bellarmine, in other instances raising the interesting question whether we may not imagine the old-time bagman or merchant coming to England, taking his orders from some great householder possessing a coat-of-arms he wished impressed on his pottery, or more often a tavern-keeper desirous of perpetuating his inn-sign. As regards the latter, the lion rampant or the conventional Tudor rose seems to be not uncommon. In some early Bellarmine in place of armorial or inn-signs, we find medallions formed by impression of coins. These are, however, rare in England.

There is little doubt that in the seventeenth century Bellarmine were not only exported to this country, but that many were made here. John Dwight of Fulham, a potter of great originality, took out a patent in 1671, and in the petition for which he stated “he had discovered the mistery of transparent earthenware . . . as also the misterie of the stoneware, vulgarly called ‘Cologne ware’; and that he designed to introduce a manufacture of the said wares into our Kingdome of Englande.” This may have referred to Bellarmine or not, but in view of the fact that the potters who had fled from the Low Countries settled in England, as potters, the patent may have referred to some special manufacture of “stoneware.”

Dwight, M. L. Solon informs us,\* “obtained from

\* “Ancient Art Stoneware of the Low Countries and Germany.”

the Company of Pots and Glass Sellers of London the engagement that they would buy only from him and refuse all ware coming from foreign parts." In addition there was a heavy duty on the importation of stoneware, so that Dwight practically obtained a monopoly of the trade.

The story of the nomenclature of the Bellarmine is that it was derisively named after the celebrated Cardinal Bellarmine, who was detested by the Protestants, especially in the Low Countries, and one method of expressing their feelings was by making use of the potter's art to express their contempt by portraying the Cardinal's features and rotund figure. The Cardinal was a controversial writer of repute, and took an active interest in the affairs of the Low Countries at the time of the Reformation, being a zealous Papist.

On the other hand, in Germany, where the vessels were largely manufactured, the mask was supposed to be a representation of the bearded head of Charlemagne. Marryat, in his "History of Pottery," writes that these "vessels were called in the reign of James I. 'Bellarmine's' in derision of Cardinal Bellarmine, and in compliment to the King; Bellarmine's celebrated letter (*De Potestate Summi Pontificis in Rebus Temporalibus*, against Barclay, condemned by Act of Parliament 1610) in which he sought to detach the English Roman Catholics from their oath of allegiance, having called forth a rejoinder from the pen of the royal author."

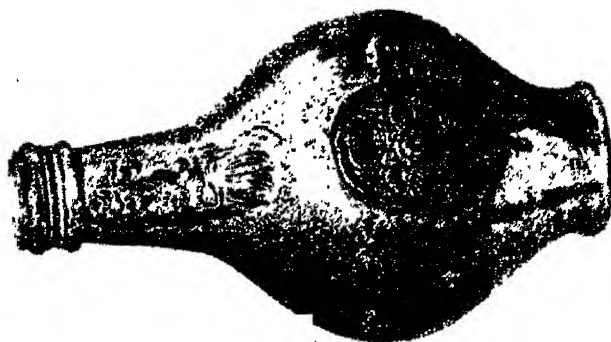
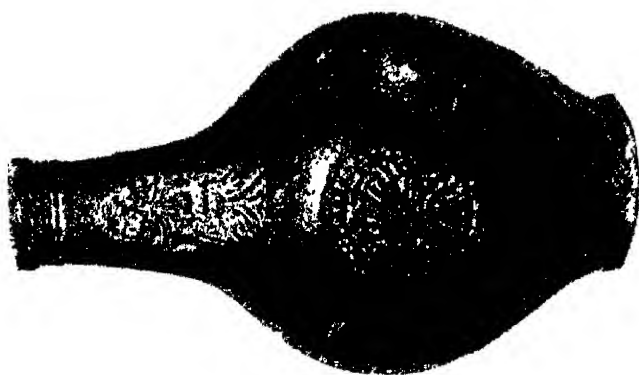
Mention is made of Bellarmine's by the dramatic authors of that time, who stood around "the throne of Shakespeare, sturdy, but unclean." Ben Jonson,

## PLATE 13.

## THREE BELLARMINES.

Late 16th or early 17th Century.

*Colchester Museum.**Photo by A. G. Wright.*







in " Bartholomew Fair," speaks of " the man with the beard." At a later date, in the " Ordinary," by William Cartwright, written in 1651, we have a reference :

" Thou thing !  
Thy belly looks like to some strutting hill  
O'ershadowed with thy rough beard like a wood ;  
Or like a larger jug that some men call  
A Bellarmine, but we a Conscience."

These jugs must have been largely utilised for over a century in England, and especially in London. Excavations of the last few years in the City have brought many to light again, and as a typical instance we may mention that when the old city ditch adjoining All Hallows Church was being cut through in 1906, the most numerous vessels of the stoneware class discovered were Bellarmines. Sound specimens are difficult to procure to-day, except the forgeries now on the market, so that the collector must be content with such genuine examples as may come in his way.

Our derisive term " ugly mug " was derived from the Bellarmine. Neighbours going for beer and meeting would ask each other, " Where are you going with your ugly mug ? " meaning, of course, " where do you get your beer."

A collection of Bellarmines varying in size and ornamentation, on some old oak mantelpiece, presents a striking picture, the crude and quaint shapes, the rich, mottled-brown colouring, with here and there a piece of lighter hue, adds a quiet dignity and distinction to the " setting " of a room.

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## CHAPTER IX

### CERAMIC TRINKETRY

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**T**RINKETRY is a useful and comprehensive word. It is simple and unpretentious, though it has an ancestry going back to a more than respectable antiquity,\* and if in its original significance it may have meant an ornament of metal, it is now generally used for any personal ornament which is hardly of sufficient importance to merit the title of jewelry. For "jewelry" seems to imply a certain value in the material apart from the workmanship (though often it may be proportionately small), but the "trinket" relies on the hand of the maker for its claims to admiration. So we may find in these trivial toys of a bygone day a particular interest ; for, though sometimes they merely reflect a passing whim of Fashion's ever-changing mood, there is often in them an artistry all the deeper for being expressed in mate-

\* "Trinket" and "trickery" are the same word (going back to the Sanskrit *tarka*, "twisted," a "spindle," interlaced wire-work). Both are also the same word as "torque," the Asiatic gorget, one of which, taken from the neck of the Gaul he slew in single combat, earned for T. Manlius and his descendants the honorific surname of Torquatus. It is the same word as "trousseau"—originally the bride's twisted bundle of garments and trinketry.—(Sir George Birdwood, *Journal R.S.A.*, July 26, 1912.)

rials of small pecuniary worth, such as steel, ivory, or pottery.

We may also class with the trifling personal ornaments the less important of those little accessories of dress and fashion which our ancestors called "toys," the dainty seals and watch-keys, tiny scent-bottles and wee boxes, also the gewgaws and baubles, such as buttons and buckles, and perhaps the less valuable of the watches and snuff-boxes. A complete collection of trinkets, if it could be made, would show us as in a mirror the tastes and fancies of those who have gone before us. Alas ! many of the pretty things were of too evanescent a nature to stand hard wear, and much that we could wish preserved has entirely vanished, while often that which remains shows only a shadow of its former daintiness. Gilding has gone, paint worn away, delicate carving and chasing is chipped and scratched, and we almost find these relics from which the glory has departed a little depressing. But among them the class of trinket with which I am dealing remains nearly as fresh and bright as when drawn hot from the kiln.

"Time does not wither nor custom stale" its "infinite variety." From the days of the Pharaohs to those of the Georgian period, from China in the East to Bristol in the West, the potter's art has been used to fashion these fragile trifles in an endless series of designs ; so the range from which we may draw examples is a wide one.

When dealing with any of the arts and crafts, one is almost sure to find its prototype among the ancient Egyptians ; but of ceramic trinketry they were not

only the originators, but also the most perfect exponents, for by no other people have such quantities of fictile ornaments been made, with, moreover, such a wealth of beauty in design and colour. We find in their tombs and ruined cities an immense variety, and of these perhaps the most interesting are the beads and pierced amulets used for stringing up into necklaces. Great numbers of them have been found, generally in coffin-cases, having been hung round the necks of the mummies. The most beautiful are certainly those glazed with greenish turquoise blue, which is also the most common colour, and no doubt its superior beauty was recognised by the Egyptians themselves. Red, yellow, and green are also very plentiful. The best-known beads are the long tubes or bugles and the scaraboid shapes, but every kind of amulet, as well as minute figurines representing the gods, were used in the same way.

There is a splendid collection of these beads at the British Museum, where the different forms and ways of stringing can be studied to great advantage. Breast ornaments, rings, and bangles made of the same material are also to be seen. Though these beads are found genuine in considerable quantities, there are, nevertheless, modern forgeries about, and buyers should be on their guard against them. Some of them are most skilful and accurate copies, but others, known by the brilliant, cold-looking lustre of the glaze, have a generally mechanical appearance.

Very few specimens of Egyptian pottery ornaments appear to be inspired as to design by gold or silver

work. Some of the rings and pendants may be copies of stone-set originals of metal, but on the whole they rely on the beauty of their colouring and, in the case of beads, on their grouping for their decorative effect.

The Romans made use of ceramic beads, and so did the Anglo-Saxons ; but afterwards in England there is a gap, till the Bow and Chelsea porcelain factories issued their dainty ware.

From the Chelsea factory comes the first piece of English porcelain of which the origin and date are absolutely certain. It is a jug dated 1745, and also inscribed "Chelsea." It was not long after this that the delightful small pieces known as "Chelsea toys" began to be offered for sale, the first notice of them appearing in 1754.\* Perhaps a few words on what was meant by "toy" in the eighteenth century may be of interest, now that the word has been narrowed down so as to mean merely a child's plaything. The term then covered almost any small portable object of decorative character—anything, in fact, which, though useful to some extent, was valued principally for its ornamental side. A "Toyman" was a seller of jewelry and bric-à-brac, and occupied a very important place among fashionable tradesmen, as he supplied

\* From the *Public Advertiser*: "To be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Ford, at his great Room in St. James's, Hay Market, this and the following day" (Dec. 17, 1754). "All the entire Stock of Chelsea Porcelain Toys, consisting of Snuff Boxes, Smelling Bottles, and Trinkets for watches (mounted in Gold and unmounted in various beautiful shapes of an elegant design and curiously painted in Enamel), a large parcel of Knife Hafts, etc. Most of the above in lots suitable for Jewellers, Goldsmiths Toy-shops, China-shops, and Workmen in various Branches of Business."—*Vide* Introductory chapter, "The Toys of Autolycus."

the beaux and belles not only with European novelties, but also with Oriental curios.

The tiny scent-bottles, seals, watch-backs and charms made at Chelsea are among the most fascinating productions of that eminently dainty factory ; the mellow outline—perhaps a result of the softness of the paste—is shown to perfection in these small pieces, wherein a quaint fancy is expressed by delicate modelling and most brilliant yet harmonious colour. They are wholly delightful. Some of them are tiny figures—there is a full-length figure of Shakespeare among these ; a masked cupid beats a drum on a seal ; and a youth and rustic maiden make love on a scent-bottle under two inches high. Others are bunches of flowers in high relief, of the well-known Chelsea character. Many of them have sentimental mottoes—often in French—both painted on the porcelain and engraved on the seal or gold mounting. The metalwork is usually delicate and well-made ; it is generally of gold or gilt metal. These little pieces are much sought after by collectors, and therefore the ubiquitous forger has marked them as a field for his wicked exploits, and unfortunately he is fairly successful in his nefarious trade. The little imitations are really very pretty ; but though they are wonderfully exact copies, there is a hardness about them which distinguishes them when placed by the genuine. Apart, they would deceive anyone but an expert.

Of Meissen porcelain (by which no doubt the Chelsea artists were inspired) are some wonderfully modelled little groups of flowers in their natural colouring, so

fragile and fresh in appearance that they might almost be real. Sometimes each blossom is separately mounted on a gold wire for fastening to a neck-band of velvet, or groups of flowers and leaves are arranged on a solid base as pendants, earrings, and beads. Similar pieces to the Chelsea toys were also made, such as seals, scent-boxes, and étuis. From the Buen Retiro factory probably issued some charmingly modelled little heads and faces intended to be set as personal ornaments. They are, I think, very scarce, in this country at any rate, as I have only seen five or six specimens, all consisting of heads and faces, mostly painted as if wearing black masks. These are mounted in gold as pins or brooches, and are quaint and effective.

A whole cabinet might easily be filled with the contributions from Wedgwood's pottery without admitting any specimens from his contemporary imitators, and to me these small things are among his most charming productions. They, of course, frankly imitate the style of old gems, but they are, after all, much more decorative than the originals, and when mounted as they were meant to be, in finely chased steel settings, they form most exquisite ornaments. I have a set of five double cameos, from a *châtelaine*, of the ordinary white on blue, which, while wonderfully effective as spots of colour at a distance, disclose the most delicate modelling when looked at under a magnifying glass. They thus fulfil the cardinal requirements of jewelry; the design and workmanship must be fine enough to afford pleasure when minutely examined, and yet be striking enough to have a decorative effect.

## PLATE 14.

## CERAMIC TRINKETRY.

1. Belt-buckle. Wedgwood's Blue Jasper, mounts of cut steel from Matthew Watt's Soho Works, Birmingham.  
Subject, Apollo.

*Victoria and Albert Museum.*

2. Earrings of Blue Jasper.

- 3 and 4. Watch-back and Bracelet of Blue Jasper.

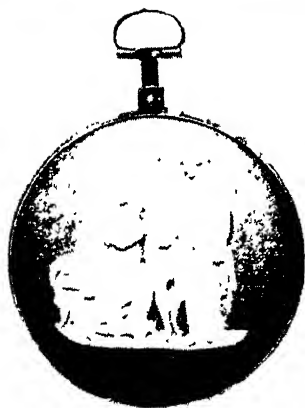
5. Chelsea Seals, etc.

*British Museum.*

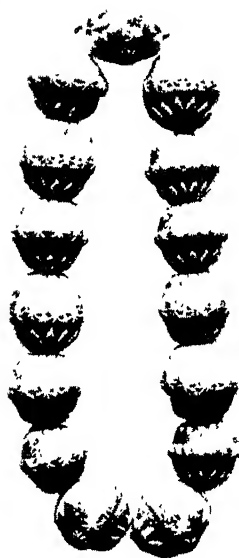




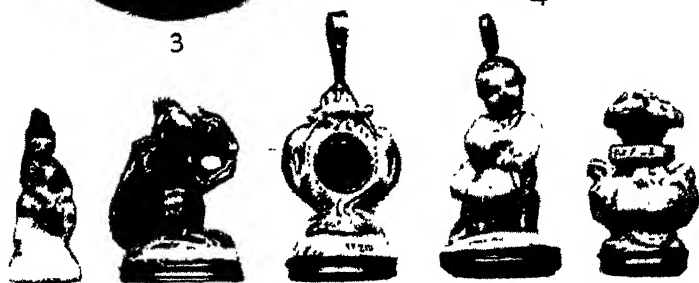
2



3



4



5



The beads of this ware are particularly charming. They are seldom decorated with figure subjects, which do not show off well on such rounded surfaces, and the ornament as a rule consists of small leaves, lines or stars ; but the disposition of the white on the blue is generally singularly happy, so that one derives great pleasure from the simple patterns. These tiny cameos are found in a multitude of designs, and of all sizes, from the very small ones for châtelaines and rings to the large ones intended for watch-backs and buckles, some of these latter, which are shaped and curved to fit the arch of the foot, being much larger than any others of those intended for personal wear, shoe-buckles being worn of enormous size at the time they were made.

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## CHAPTER X

### STAFFORDSHIRE FIGURES

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**P**ERHAPS in a small manner, yet important as a sidelight to the change that has come over the peasantry of this country, is the decoration of the home of the cottager. Even within the memory of many of us the simplicity of the cottage and the restful charm of the interior still remain as a pleasant memory. The open hearth, the mantelshelf with its dimity valance, the Staffordshire figures, a few pieces of pewter, old coloured prints, and other domestic articles which have now become obsolete. To-day the home of the country labourer, with rare exceptions, is resplendent with nearly everything that is objectionable to those who care for what is beautiful; and there is no indication of the continuity of that which was instinctive with their forebears.

“ Well! everyone has their tastes, but for my part, my own self

I'd rather have the figures on my poor dead grandmother's shelf,

And a shepherd with a crook after a lamb with two gilt horns,

And such a Jemmy Jessamy in topboots and sky-blue vest,  
And a frill and flowered waistcoat with a fine bowpot at the breast.”

The history of the simple but quaint Staffordshire figures which were the treasures of the rural folk, date back to the eighteenth century, illustrating in no small way the dress, customs, manners and fashions of the times in which they were made. Although many of these figures, groups and statuettes appear almost as caricatures to-day, yet there is little reason to doubt, judging from contemporary prints, that they were faithful representations of the dress and the vocation of those who "lived and had their being" at that period. John Dwight, the famous Fulham potter who took out two patents in 1671 and 1684 for making his famous ware, gave us figures of meritorious execution in stoneware which he named "Porcellane." His statuettes are some of the best examples of ceramic statuary made in this country.\* Two are well-known—the pathetic half-length figure of his dead child, Lydia, and the famous bust of Prince Rupert. From the time of Dwight's death until the first quarter of the eighteenth century there appears to have been no ceramic figures made.

However, it is to the Wood family and his successors that we are indebted for many of the figures, groups and statuettes which are now called Staffordshire figures, but whether we can speak with certainty as to their being the first potters to make them, ceramic authorities have been unable to decide. Professor Church in his handbook on "English Earthenware"

\* "They stand alone; nothing in old English Pottery can compare with them."—*The Portfolio*, Old English Pottery (1893), A. H. Church.

gives the following list of the early makers of Staffordshire figures :

“ Ralph Wood, senr. and junr., Thomas Whieldon, Aaron Wood, Josiah Wedgwood, J. Neale & Company, Robert Garner, Lakin & Poole, Wood & Caldwell, Turner & Company, J. Lockett, J. Dale, Davenport, Barker, Sutton & Till, Walton, Salt, Edge & Grocott.”

The first of this line of potters, Ralph Wood, son of Ralph Wood the honest miller of Burslem, who was born in 1715 and died in 1772, had a pottery in Burslem, and made many of the charming figures which are so treasured to-day. Aaron Wood, his brother, was also a potter, but it is Ralph Wood and his son of the same name who made figures one of the most important features of their production. It is to be noted that the two Ralph Woods were the first English figure makers to mark their wares. One of the best-known pieces of Ralph Wood, senior, is the well-known Vicar and Moses marked “ R. Wood, Burslem.” This piece was afterwards imitated by several potters, in many cases badly modelled and coloured. In Ralph Wood, junr., as Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead in his “ Earthenware Collector ” states, “ we deal with an artistic personality of less power and distinction than his father, though his powers were still considerable. His marked pieces are impressed “ Ra Wood, Burslem.” Enoch Wood, son of Aaron Wood, who had a pottery also at Burslem, was also a maker of figures, and on a bust of John Wesley there is an inscription on the back stating that he sat to Enoch Wood, sculptor of Burslem in 1791. Wesley’s bust was also imitated by

many potters. It is said that the number of specimens run into hundreds, so great was the popularity of the famous preacher. As a companion to Wesley, Enoch Wood made a bust of Whitfield, and the following inscription is on a tablet at the back :

“ The Revd. George Whitfield,  
Died Sept. 30th 1770, aged 56  
Enoch Wood : Sculp. Burslem.”

In 1790 Enoch Wood took into partnership James Caldwell.

The early figures show great originality, not only in design but also in the method of decoration. Mr. W. Burton in his “ History of English Earthenware ” states that the work of the elder Ralph Wood can be distinguished by the colouring of the figures. These “ appear to have been made of a rather darkish buff or yellow body, doubtless containing local clays. The colours are always in the form of coloured glazes of rather quiet tones—brownish purple, yellow, grey-blue, and olive-green, practically identical with those on the tortoise-shell ware of the period.”

The best modellers of all the early figures were Ralph Wood, senior and junior. If imitation is the sincerest flattery then the Wood family are certainly to be ranked high, as they were closely copied by other potters, and although it can be perceived that in many of the imitators’ figures there is much originality, yet, taken as a whole, they bear a lower and common standard as compared with the work of the Woods. Among the latter names mentioned by Professor Church the figures of John Walton are much prized, a large pro-

portion of the groups have a spreading tree background—a stump or branch on which are clusters of five leaves, resembling the oak leaf, and each cluster bears a flower of different colours, generally coloured yellow, blue or pink. A proportion of these figures have “Walton” impressed on a raised ribbon on the back of the base of the figure. Walton began his business at Burslem at the close of the eighteenth century, and the pottery probably closed about 1840. His figures have been described by Chaffers as coarse and rude, yet there is a simplicity and charm about them which appeals to all collectors of early Staffordshire figures. Walton was not the originator of the “tree” background, for there are earlier specimens made by Wood & Caldwell, Ralph Salt and others, and the device was followed later by many potters. Nearly all Walton’s productions were coloured in enamel. Two of Walton’s marked pieces, “The Flight to Egypt” and “The Return from Egypt,” are acknowledged to be among the best of his productions.

The famous Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795), who was descended from a race of potters, made numerous figures in his earlier years, mostly not marked. Miss Meteyard in her “Life of Josiah Wedgwood” mentions that one of Wedgwood’s artists, Theodore Parker, in 1769 modelled the figures of Prudence, Milton, Shakespeare and others. The Rhead brothers, in “Staffordshire Pots and Potting,” state that “figures of lions with fore-paw resting on a globe, appear in many collections and were made both by Wedgwood and other potters.” Wedgwood’s figures were brilliantly



coloured in enamels, and well executed, but we prefer to think of Wedgwood in connection with his jasper, basalt-ware and medallions.

With the production of porcelain figures, groups, busts, and statuettes at Bow, Chelsea, Derby, Longton Hall and elsewhere, the imitation of these in earthenware by the Staffordshire potters is to be noticed. Many of them are excellent copies as regards modelling and colouring. The reproduction in earthenware of the well-known Bow and Chelsea "Cupids" and the "Tithe Pig" of the Derby factory are cases which will serve as illustrations.

The later Staffordshire productions were more ornate in decoration, figures and groups often having as a background a "bocage" of flowers with foliage, stumps or branch of a tree with leaves. Although many of these showed much originality, there is little doubt that the influence of contemporary porcelain works may be distinctly traced in the models and embellishments. Many of the figures were of a rural character. As typical examples, "The Sportsman" with gun and dog, "The Haymaker," "Shepherd and Shepherdess," "The Gardener, and "Old Age" being two separate figures of man and woman in rustic garb. Classical figures were also made, such as "Britannia," "Neptune," "Venus," "Diana," "The Seasons." Representations of the leading men of the day were also in vogue, and none are more familiar than the models of Wesley, Whitfield and Nelson.

In addition to these figures, etc., many animals, birds and figures in relief were modelled, some of them

## PLATE 15.

## STAFFORDSHIRE FIGURES.

1. The Quarrel.
2. The Tythe Pig.





in a cream-coloured earthenware, others were in the bright enamel colours that we are accustomed to see in the statuettes and groups.

It must be remembered that not all the earthenware figures and groups were made in Staffordshire, as they were also produced at Sunderland, Leeds and Swansea.

To-day there are many fakes or forgeries of Staffordshire figures, and it behoves the novice to be wary when he is purchasing. It is somewhat difficult to put into words the knowledge that will enable a buyer to know whether a piece is genuine or not. It is only experience that teaches, is a true saying, but if a buyer has not that, how is he to judge? Notice the modelling of the figure; if it is a fake, it is coarse and the colouring is crude, often it will be smeared with a varnish, applied with a dirty brush to give the appearance of age. Another method is to insist in writing on the invoice exactly what it is represented to be. A dealer told us when he is in doubt after acquiring a ceramic piece, he keeps it on his table, or as he graphically described, "he lives with it, and like living with a person he discovers the true value."

Recent auction sales have resulted in showing a considerable advance in value of Staffordshire figures. Ralph Wood's well-known piece, "The Vicar and Moses," a group in translucent colours 10 in. high, sold for 9½ guineas; "Cupid seated on a Panther," in translucent colours on oblong base 8½ in. high, by Ralph Wood, was sold for 85 guineas; Enoch Wood's "St. Peter"—7½ guineas; Walton's "Fruit Sellers"—4 guineas. The familiar "Tithe Pig," which could be

purchased for £2 or £3 a few years ago, could not now be obtained under 6 or 7 guineas. A good example of "The Sportsman" is now valued at £4 or £5.

Ordinary rustic figures fetch a ready sale at £2 or £3. The price varies, as everything depends, not only on the sound condition of the example, but also on its modelling, its colouring, and last but not least whether it bears the name of its maker. In many dealers' shops, figures are often seen of indifferent character, badly modelled, unevenly coloured and chipped. These should be left severely alone. The collector should always make quality the chief consideration, and should not be induced to purchase a figure because it is low in price.

The quaint simplicity of these Staffordshire figures appeals to many, and a collection of typical pieces—each representative of its class—adds an old-world charm to the room in which they are placed, besides being of historic interest to those who are the fortunate possessors.

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## CHAPTER XI

### TOBY JUGS

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**F**ANCIFUL though it may seem to say so, the Toby jug, which is familiar to all, embodies the spirit of our forefathers. It may not be a thing of beauty, but even those who are not attracted by our English Silenuses have at least a kindly feeling for it. To collectors its evolution has ever been a puzzle. The earliest example dates only from the eighteenth century, though one may detect a slight resemblance to it in the fourteenth century pale buff clay jug in the Guildhall Museum, London, of which the upper portion is in the form of a human face, with hands and arms crossed on its body. Perhaps, too, in the Greybeards or Bellarmine jugs a similar general decorative idea to that of the Toby is apparent, though the result is vastly different.

Having said so much by way of asserting the principle as regards decorative development, it can be stated definitely that the "Toby Fillpot" jug of the eighteenth century, the jolly fat Toby, "in fair round belly, and good capon lined," with whose beaming features everybody is acquainted, is essentially English and characteristic of its period. Toby was not always "beery" or even stout, the scarce jugs with the

Whieldon tortoiseshell colouring and rich glaze, now so keenly sought after, lack the generous proportions and in some cases the happy smile of the later Toby.

Possibly these early Whieldon examples represent the beginning of the eighteenth century Toby. In the elder Ralph Wood jugs we see a Toby of ampler paunch and more bibulous aspect, probably suggested by some well-known figure of the day. This production, which, has come to be commonly accepted as a type almost of a national character, may be described as one of the most distinctive achievements in the whole range of British ceramics. Many versions were turned out by Ralph Wood, and the design was varied almost indefinitely by subsequent potters.

Such jugs occur marked "R. Wood" and "Ra Wood," the signatures being those of father and son. There is also a number of unmarked specimens undoubtedly by the elder Ralph Wood. There is one in the British Museum numbered "H.28" which is unmarked, but the best ceramic authorities judge it to be the work of Ralph Wood, senior. Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead, a recognised authority, states that it was produced from the same mould by Ralph Wood, junior, in the under-glaze colouring affected by his father and signed "Ra Wood."

Examples appear with a small barrel between the feet of the figure, and the pipe either held in the hand, or resting against the seat. The colouring was varied in all manner of ways, and later, for the sake of novelty as well as to lessen the cost, the enamel method of decoration was adopted.



One of the finest collections was the Earle, which was recently dispersed, and it contained a rather curious seated Toby holding a dark brown jug in two hands, resting it on left knee; he wears a straight cravat, breeches tied with bows at the knee and bows again on the shoes. This is in translucent glazing and is most probably by Ralph Wood, senior.

Toby jugs, as has already been suggested, depicted many famous men of the time; perhaps the "Lord Vernon" type was the most popular. He is shown sitting on a barrel against which is propped a churchwarden pipe, the figure holding a quart pot, and the right foot resting on a dog. It was the precursor of a large number of "sailor" jugs, extremely characteristic and well modelled. Thus we have "Lord Howe," in red coat, purple waistcoat and white trousers, seated on a chest and holding the indispensable jug and glass. Another is the "Old Sailor," with a coat of blue, seated on a box labelled "Dollars," in his right hand a jug, with the inscription "Success to our wooden Walls." The sailor with his box of dollars provided Felix Pratt with a *motif* for one of his characteristic pieces. It is a jug in the form of a sailor seated on a chest and is inscribed :

"Hollo, Brother Briton  
, Whoever thou be,  
    Sit down on  
    That chest of  
Hard Dollars by me  
And drink a health  
To all sealors bold."

"Sealor" being the Staffordshire vernacular for sailor.

The example is in the Willett collection, Brighton (No. 297). It is significant that the "Drunken Parson" was also a favourite Toby; he is generally depicted as a sly leering rascal. In the Freeth collection there is an example. The parson, seated on a red chair resting on marbled base, is pouring ale into a glass. He has flesh-coloured face and hands, a full white wig, coat, breeches and boots black; waistcoat and stockings black and white striped; black three-cornered hat. In "The Squire" we have a Toby sitting bolt upright on a three-cornered arm-chair, looking important and well satisfied, holding in his left hand the customary churchwarden pipe, and in his right a jug. As already stated, the Ralph Wood model was copied by all potters in this country, with but slight variation, the piece enjoying widespread popularity. Examples are met with marked "Neale & Co.," "Hollins" and "Walton."

Walton is the well-known Burslem figure maker, who began business about 1790 and produced a number of jugs, among them the fine standing Toby (marked Walton) in the British Museum. This introduces us to an entirely new and most desirable type, of easy and graceful pose and skilful modelling. The figure carries a jug in the right hand, and in the left a pipe. It was sometimes called "Hearty Good Fellow" Toby and was freely imitated by the potters, the imitations being as close as the potters could make them.

Turning from the Staffordshire potters to Yorkshire, we find a Toby that was primitive, both in modelling and decoration. The eyes of the piece are expressed by

single dots, the vest and the eyebrows by a series of dots, and other portions of the costume are decorated with dots or other powdered devices. The plinths and occasionally the hair are coloured by the process known as sponging. A characteristic Yorkshire example is the standing snuff-taker, and is perhaps the best known; in some of them the hat is decorated with geometrical and other patterns. Rockingham produced the "Snuff-taker" in the rich brown glazings associated with the productions of this factory.

Passing allusion must be made to various little Tobys, differing but slightly in general character from their bigger brothers. Usually the subject is represented standing and occasionally decorated with silver lustre; many of them were made by Neale & Co.—of the seated ones "Paul Pry" may be cited as characteristic, and is seen with both mauve and brown coat, high three-cornered hat, baggy breeches and short curled wig. Lastly, by way of completing the list, there are Mrs. Tobys, also holding bottle and glass, the unfailing sign of the ruling passion in all Tobys.

At auction Toby jugs have realised high prices in recent years, a first-rate example by such a potter as Ralph Wood fetching over £160. A Toby by Neale & Co. lately sold reached the high amount of £40. The reader must be warned, however, that there are on the market a large number of forgeries or genuine, but poor, commonplace specimens. The imitations are not all necessarily modern, although many are Tobys of to-day's make, but older pieces made by the

PLATE 16.  
TOBY JUG.  
*Neale & Co.*





less-instructed order of potters and intended for the cheapest market and appealing to vulgar tastes. The collector must therefore be wary—especially if he is still in his novitiate—when he contemplates a purchase. The only safeguard he has—apart, of course, from the opinion and advice of an expert friend—is to compare the proffered example with a similar but well-authenticated piece in one of the museums which make a feature of pottery.

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## CHAPTER XII

### BATTERSEA AND BILSTON ENAMELS

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THE Battersea Enamels—if genuine specimens—in their infinite variety of shape, colour and ornamentation, form another subdivision—and one which is by no means unimportant—in the long list of the smaller curios.

It seems from the evidence available that the Battersea Enamels came from the enamel works founded at York House, Battersea, formerly a town residence of the Archbishops of York—in or about 1750, by Stephen Theodore Janssen, a London Alderman and a stationer of St. Paul's Churchyard, who was Lord Mayor in 1754. In 1756 Janssen became bankrupt, and in June of the same year the following advertisement appeared in the *Public Advertiser* :

“ To be sold by auction, by order of the assignees, on Monday next, June 8, 1756, and succeeding days at York Place, Battersea, Surrey, the household furniture and entire stock of Stephen Theodore Janssen, Esq., consisting of a great variety of beautiful enamelled pictures, snuff-boxes, watch-cases, bottle-labels, etc., a great variety of black enamels of various sizes, copper frames for mounting the unfinished enamels with all the utensils, etc., belonging to the



manufactory, copper plates, beautifully engraved by the best hands."

In spite of this sale, there is little doubt that someone "stepped into the breach" and carried on the factory, for at the Guelph Exhibition, held at the New Gallery, London, in 1891, there were exhibits of Battersea Enamels belonging to the late Charles Storr Kennedy which included a case for scent-bottles with portraits of David Garrick and Mrs. Siddons, a bonbonnière with a portrait of Miss Gunning, afterwards Duchess of Hamilton, and a pink étui, with a miniature of Mrs. Brooks, wife of the director of the works from 1770 to 1780. It is, therefore, probable that the Battersea Works never closed its doors from their opening in 1750. Further research may some day clear up the date of the final closing of the works.

Collectors in pursuit of Battersea Enamels should be careful not to be imposed upon by the numerous forgeries on the market; one sees them in many antique shops. By their appearance they are French in character, being, if we may say so, too perfect. The colouring is too bright, and lack the softness of tone of the true Battersea. Place a genuine example by the side of a forged piece and the lesson is soon learnt!

Ravenet, a skilful engraver, must be given the credit of introducing the process of painting on a rigid surface by means of paper transfer, and he assumed the direction of the engraving department, and one of his pupils, Robert Hancock, who after Janssen's failure in 1755 migrated to Worcester,

assisted him. Another pupil of Ravenet was John Hall, the engraver, who also worked for the Bow factory. It will be seen, therefore, that during the first period of the works, there was a small group of engravers working at Battersea who afterwards achieved fame in other directions. That the engraving department was most important is evident from the number and quality of the examples extant, and also from the circumstance that a good deal of painting was done here for the porcelain factories of both Bow and Chelsea. Although there have been many attempts to prove that transfer printing was first practised by Sadler & Green at Liverpool, there is no doubt, as Mr. W. Burton states in his "English Porcelain," that "a careful examination of all the ascertained facts and references would, however, trace its origin to the use of printed patterns in the decoration of Battersea Enamels." It is known that Battersea printed on enamels as early as 1753.\* We have Horace Walpole's letter to his friend, Richard Bentley, written from Strawberry Hill, dated September 18, 1755, in which he states: "I shall send you a trifling snuff-box, only as a sample of the new manufacture at Battersea, which is done with copper plates." The inference, indeed, is that transfer printing was the most important production of Battersea. It is certain also that the painted pieces were the most distinctive of the Battersea productions, doubtless from the fact that the skill

\* Transfer printing was done at Battersea in or about 1753, and we have an "Enamel" printed there with that date on it.—"Transfer Printing on Enamel, Porcelain and Pottery." William Turner, F.S.S. Chapman & Hall (1907).

employed in this department was of a higher order. The painting was equal to any work produced at Chelsea, and this will be noticed especially in floral pieces.

The engraved pieces include :

Plaques and medallions usually framed in ormolu, the size varying from two to six inches or more ; snuff-boxes, pomade-pots, caskets, decanter labels, etc. The subjects represented are—portraits, as Sir Robert Walpole, Horace Walpole, Maria Gunning (Countess of Coventry), Frederick, Prince of Wales, the Young Pretender, etc. Religious subjects as—The Crucifixion, Christ on the Cross, The Virgin and Child with St. Anne. Historical and fancy subjects, many taken from classical history, as—Venus mourning the death of Adonis, Laocoon casting his spear at the wooden horse, etc. In these the influence of François Boucher is strongly felt ; doubtless many of them were copied from engravings after this master. There are also the various Fêtes Champêtres, Fêtes Vénitiennes, Amusements Champêtres, taken from the numerous engravings of the period after Watteau, Fragonard and other artists.

A word must be said for some of the decanter-labels, for they are especially charming and well engraved. The designs of dancing cupids are exactly suited to their spaces, the colouring is pleasing, being of a soft brown or a pale grey purple.

Transfer printing would appear to be especially suited to the material of enamel, the prints being extremely clear. The colours are black, brown,

mauve or purple, deep blue, rose colour and an iron red, each of these, even the rose colour, peculiarly sensitive to variation of heat in the firing, giving a perfectly clear impression. As to the methods of production and the colours, Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead gives the following technical details :

“ The application of enamel in its various forms to the substance of metal, usually copper, is a very old one, having been practised by most of the nations of the ancient world. The technique of the painted enamels of Battersea and Bilston differs in no essential from those of Limoges or the painted Chinese enamels of Canton, being a system of painting in flexible colours on a stanniferous glazed groundwork, though in the case of Limoges it was generally a monochrome painted in white alone.

“ It is found that binoxide of tin or stannic oxide introduced in a finely powdered state into the substance of a glaze produces an opaque white enamel well adapted to receive painting. The metal, therefore, first receives a coating of this substance, which forms a ground for the subsequent painting.

“ The colours are a preparation of certain metallic oxides or salts, mixed with some vitrifiable substance or flux, which upon fusion causes them to adhere permanently to the surface on which they are applied. The firing is effected at a relatively low temperature, since the colour bases are weakened by the addition of the flux, the chief materials of which are felspar, borax, nitre, litharge, alkaline carbonates and preparations of bismuth. Under any circumstances the heat must necessarily be below that at which copper melts.

“ Of these colour bases blue is obtained from oxide of cobalt. The greens are a preparation of oxide of

chromium, generally obtained by the decomposition of either chromate or bi-chromate of potash, or of chromate of mercury. Peroxide of iron or ferric oxide produces the various reds, browns and violets. Oxide of antimony gives the different shades of yellow. Oxides of copper form silicates which are red with sub-oxides, and blue with the protoxides when associated with an alkaline silicate. Peroxide of manganese is used for violet, puce and black: sesquioxide of uranium produces an orange; oxide of iridium gives a black. The famous purple of Cassius is a precipitate formed by adding a solution of protochloride and perchloride of tin to a solution of terchloride of gold, or by digesting metallic tin in a solution of gold terchloride. This forms the base of all the pink and purple enamel colours, including the sensitive rose pigment.

“Enamel painting or copper differs in no material respect from painting on china or earthenware, and mainly resolves itself into an acquaintance with the workability of the colours on the enamel surface, and a knowledge of the changes effected in the hues of the colours and their degree of weakening or otherwise during firing. For example, rose colour before firing is a dull purple, and is used as a test colour for firing the kiln or muffle; when fired at the proper heat it is the colour of the blush-rose; if under-fired it assumes an orange hue; if, on the other hand, it is over-fired, it is the dull dead mauve or purple similar to its hue before firing. Further, some knowledge of the chemical properties of the colours is required in the matter of using them mixed together—an iron red, for example, mixed with a copper green will not agree.

“The medium used is turpentine together with its fatty residue or oil, which is necessary to bring the

colour to a proper consistency for working. Oil of tar may also be used. A little oil of aniseed will serve to keep the colours *open* and prevent them drying too quickly during working.

"The technique of Battersea Enamel painting is extremely variable. The earlier pieces are painted in a more or less transparent colour: afterwards a certain amount of *impasto* was adopted, i.e. a free use of white enamel mixed with the colours, the effect resembling *gouache*, or body colour in water-colour painting, though it must be confessed, not so satisfactory."

The various candlesticks, étuis, bonbonnières, snuff-boxes, caskets, etc., are richly coloured with subject and, in many instances, are painted with a degree of skill and finish which is quite extraordinary. The subjects are generally designed in a Rococo framework imposed on a ground of yellow, pink, turquoise or other colour with diapered patternings in white. In many instances the personages represented, and often the costume, will serve to determine the date of the pieces.

Little space need be devoted to the Enamels of Bilston. The exact date of their first introduction in the market is not known, but the ware was obviously intended to compete with the popular Battersea. The works were started by George Brett. The production was considerable and of a character similar to that of Battersea, though slightly inferior in its ornamentation. In the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington there are examples of Battersea and Bilston enamels in the same case, and a close study of these will enable the collector to note the

variations in the work. There is an absence of finish and a certain crudeness to be noticed in the Bilston Enamels as compared with those of Battersea.

Little is known definitely of the productions of Bilston. In "The Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue" of the Schreiber collection is a short list of objects attributed to this factory. The list includes a medallion of Benjamin Franklin, with the inscription "Dr. Franklin" printed in black. One of Rodney, inscribed "Adml. Rodney," printed in purple, another of Captain George Farmer, who was blown up with his ship, the *Quebec*, on October 6, 1799, in an engagement off Ushant. The plaque, a transfer print in purple, was copied from an engraving by Murphy. Strangely enough, in Lady Charlotte Schreiber's "Journals" (1911) there is no mention of her purchasing a single piece of Bilston Enamel, although there are frequent entries of her buying Battersea Enamels in England and on the Continent. It is possible that some of the pieces purchased as Battersea were eventually ascribed to Bilston.

Perhaps the most important feature of the Bilston production which was carried on during the era of "Powder and Patch" is patch-boxes. These are small square, or oval, generally made of enamel, and occasionally with a small mirror of glass or steel on the inside of the cover. Chaffers refers to a *trouvaille* "of about 2,000 of these enamel patch-boxes which was displayed *en plein jour* by a lady in whose house they had been stowed away in cases." When the factory failed in the early years of the nineteenth

## PLATE 17.

## BATTERSEA AND BILSTON ENAMELS.

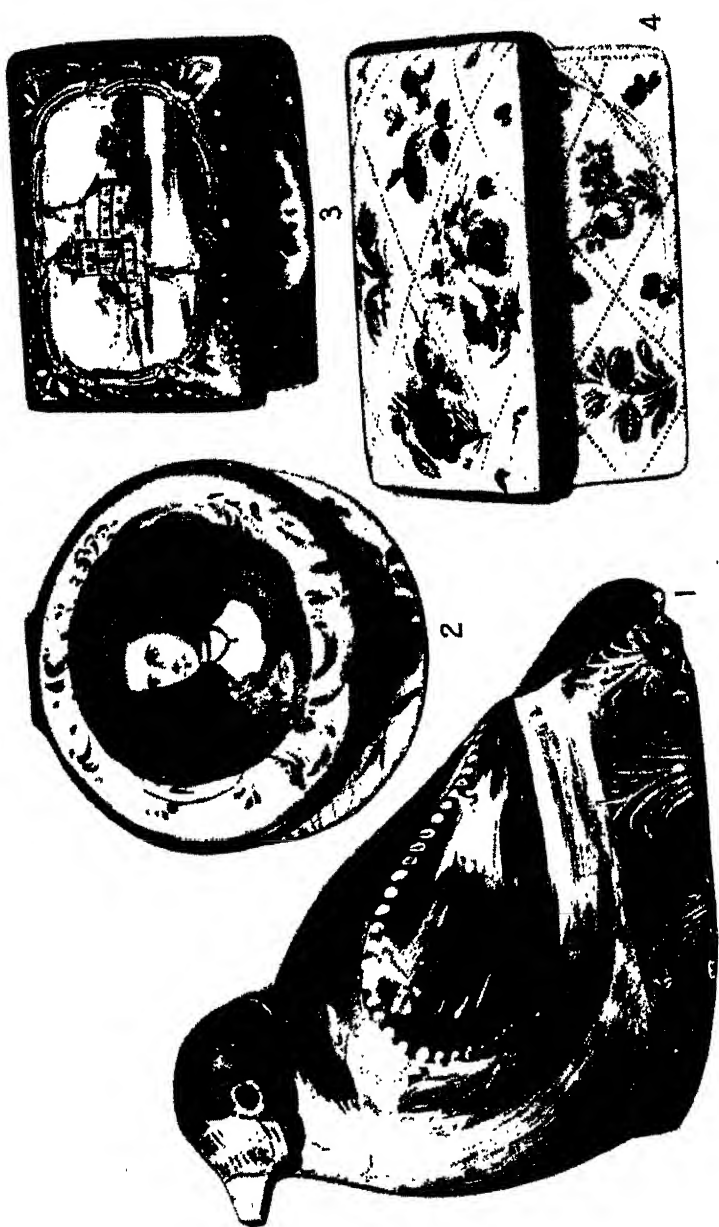
## BILSTON. . . . .

1. Bird in colour.

## BATTERSEA. . . . .

2. Box, circular shape, Portrait of Lady and Sprays of Flowers.
3. Box, claret-colour ground, Landscape and Panels of Flowers.
4. Box, white ground, decorated with Bouquets of Flowers.







century, they were taken in lieu of rent from the proprietor of the works by this lady's grandfather.

The best period of the works is said to have been from 1760 to 1770. But as the *Wednesbury Borough News* of February 15, 1913, refers to an old man named Nat Hadley, who lived a quarter of a century earlier at a little shop in the town and was the last surviving workman in the enamel trade of this district, it would seem that some sort of production was continued well into the nineteenth century. The extract, which is interesting, is as follows :

“ At the little shop, shown opposite the street lamp, there lived some quarter of a century ago an old man named Nathaniel Hadley, who was the last surviving workman who had been engaged in the Wednesbury Enamel trade. . . . His knowledge of the subjects was intimate and his memory good ; and reliable information was rescued from oblivion. As it is, who outside the town ever heard of ‘ Wednesbury Enamels ’ ? They are always known to the experts as ‘ Bilston Enamels,’ and are so labelled in museums and private collections. This was because the trade was common to the two towns, but all the metal blanks, rims and fittings were produced in the latter, where it was succeeded by the japanning industry.

“ The late Thomas Anthony Ellis, of Earl's Lane, Wednesbury, was another who had worked at the enamel trade in this town during his early youth. There was little or no difficulty in getting together a loan collection for the Wolverhampton Exhibition of 1864, large enough to fill its show-case now in the Wednesbury Art Gallery, but at the present time it contains but a poor remnant of the exhibits, so few of the owners being willing to part with them.”

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## CHAPTER XIII

### SILVER BRIC-À-BRAC

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**D**OMESTIC silver is the subject of one of "The Collector Series," and there is, therefore, no need to introduce the subject historically, or technically, or to do more than state that the legal obligation to have silver marked is fully set forth in Mr. W. A. Young's volume. Therein is treated bric-à-brac in silver and Sheffield plate, but only slightly, because the smallest of silver goods were held not to be domestic wares. Yet, if a collector will take the trouble to go to the Victoria and Albert Museum, or even to spend an hour or two in shop-window gazing in the West End of London, he will discover that there are a surprising number of little things made of silver, or mounted with silver, which are worth collecting. Here is the harvest of just one such stroll :

Caddy Spoons	Patch Boxes
Wine Labels	Medallions
Sugar Tongs	Snuff Graters
Nutmeg Graters	Pin Cushions
Silver Pipes	Writing Tablets
Punch Ladles	Counter Boxes

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Sauce Labels	Needle and Bodkin Cases
Comfit Boxes	Étui Cases
Pomander Boxes	Thimble and Bodkin Cases
Scent Flasks	Toys
Corkscrews	Toothpick Cases

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The foregoing must be far from complete, but to have noticed more than twenty items of interest in one short excursion of two hours' duration shows how big is the field to be cultivated.

The first four in the list are perhaps the easiest tracks to follow. Tea was introduced into this country in the seventeenth century, and for many years it was a luxury. The price was high, so high that the mistress of the house kept it under lock and key. Access to the caddy in her absence was confined to her deputy, and the portion was carefully measured out each time the pot was brought out for use. A shell, appropriate to the requirements of the household, came to be regarded as a necessary adjunct to the caddy. The silversmiths saw in this an opportunity for getting fresh trade, and placed caddy spoons on the market in large numbers, particularly at the end of the eighteenth century. They are worth the attention of those who have slim purses and small cabinets. Many are marked for place of origin, year and quality, and if the ordinary precautions, taken with silver, are observed there is no reason why collectors should be defrauded by dishonest dealers.

The absence of a mark on the lighter and smaller spoons, and on those that have handles of ivory,

mother-of-pearl, or ebony, is not necessarily proof that the pieces are not genuine or old. The assay master cannot compel the silversmith to submit articles which weigh less than 5 dwt. each to the official test. It should not be forgotten that some caddy spoons were made of Sheffield plate, and care should be taken to differentiate between solid silver and other grades. A few examples in "Old Sheffield" might very properly be added to one's cabinet.

The best public collection is that presented, some years ago, to the museum at South Kensington, by Mr. J. H. Fitz-Henry. It numbers 200 patterns, all different, and probably more than half the available patterns are represented in the cases in which they are displayed. As might be expected, the original shell is the *motif* of many caddy spoons, and actual shells, silver-mounted and handled, may occasionally be found. Some "spoons" are miniature shovels, dust-pans and jockey caps, while others are true to the type of spoons for more serious purposes. Some of the old shagreen caddies made before George III. came to the throne were fitted with a spoon which had a pierced bowl and a long handle terminating in a pointed end. They may have been used for measuring the tea, but another opinion about them is that the tea was strained as it was poured, while the pointed end served on occasion to clear the strainer in the teapot. Similar spoons are sometimes sold in sets as lemon or punch spoons. The plain fact is that the use of these dainty little articles is not quite established. It is worth recording that among the silver sugar

tongs is a pattern very like the fire implement with a pricker screwed through the end, to about two-thirds the length of the legs.

Getting back to our list, wine labels for decanters and sauce bottles offer attractions. They also were made both in silver and old Sheffield plate, and they are so variously contrived that many details of the silversmith's craft can be studied in a representative collection. Some of the borders were embossed, while those of the plated variety had silver gadroon edges and small shell decorations. Chasing and engraving was introduced in various ways, and some of the names were pierced. The sauce labels were similar but smaller. Most of these labels have a chain, but there are other patterns, such as a plain collar splayed like a tiny barrel-hoop, or a wire ring and a disc threaded on a loop. To anyone interested in dining in the eighteenth century, these labels open a distinct field for enquiry. Below is a short list of wine, spirits and sauces, and it might easily be expanded.

#### WINES AND SPIRITS

Boal	Calcavella	Sherry
Madeira	Lisbon	Bucellas
Hock	White Wine	Perry
Port	Cape	Vidonia
Hermitage	Burgundy	Champagne
Teneriffe	Arinto	Constantia
Malmsey	Tinta	Sercial

## SAUCES AND SPICES

Soy	Lemon Pickle	Cayenne
Chilli Vinegar	Harvey	Anchovy
Regent	Universal	Pepper

It is, happily, no part of the writer's business to explain what all these goods were like. There is the list ; let those investigate who will !

Nutmeg-graters of silver are interesting relics of a bygone age. Some of them are box form, and were carried by their owners about their person when they travelled. Mulled wine, or negus, was a "night-cap," and those who took it had often to satisfy an individual taste. There were all sorts of patterns, some of them quite conventional in shape and hardly to be distinguished—save in the colour of the metal—from the common penny (pre-war) pattern. Others were tubular, cylindrical or vase shape, or were secreted in boxes which externally suggested a snuff-box. A number of ingenious latches and fasteners for keeping the grater part in its place are a feature of this class of article, which were made in the greatest numbers at the turn of the eighteenth century. Only a comparatively few seventeenth century nutmeg-graters have been identified.

As for the other items in the list, the silver pipes were usually of the churchwarden type and jointed in two places to allow them to be packed in a pocket-case. Punch-ladles usually had slender handles of coco-wood, ebony or whalebone. Collectors should bear in mind that a dated coin in the bowl does not prove the age



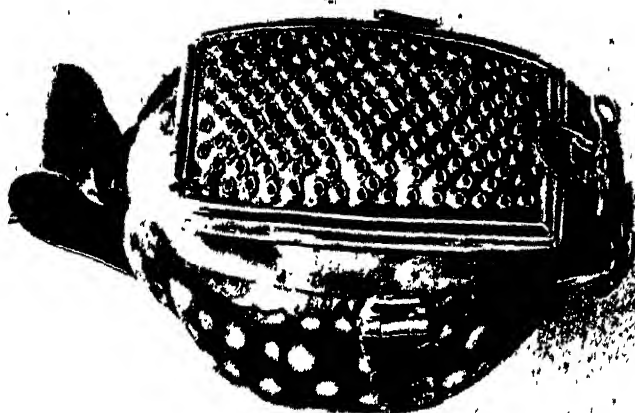
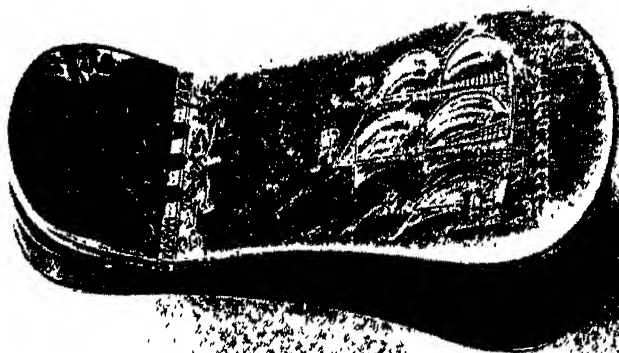
of whole articles. An old coin is easily soldered into a modern bowl. Writing tablets were thin ivory leaves arranged on a pin, and were often silver-sheathed. Corkscrews of silver would be useless, but they were sometimes handled in silver and the screw protected by a silver cap. Thimble and bodkin cases are quaint little contrivances suggesting a miniature mace, while the full complement of implements for an *étui* was a pair of scissors, tweezers, a stiletto, a bodkin, and a knife. The scent-flask and pomander were little vessels or boxes, in which a small piece of fine sponge was placed so as to absorb a small quantity of aromatic perfume. The *vinaigrette* was another name for similar receptacles. The uses of the various boxes mentioned in our list are sufficiently indicated by the word prefixed in each case.

Finally there are the "toys," miniature household articles cleverly reproduced in silver. They were commonly spoken of as Dutch, and probably most of them did come from Holland, where this branch of the silversmith's craft is still practised in the interests of dealers who cater for visitors. An appreciable number of the old toys were marked at the London Assay Office, and the probable explanation is that they were sent over here in the rough state, and finished after they had been stamped. We have compiled a list of the various articles shown in a single case at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Nothing later than the eighteenth century is included, and where a specific date is given on the label it is added in brackets :

## PLATE 18.

## SILVER BRIC-À-BRAC.

1. Snuff-grater formed of a shell of the tropical stag cowry.  
Mounted in silver. English; early 18th Century.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*
2. Snuff-grater of silver engraved with the crest of Edmonds  
(Yorkshire) and monogram of H. E. English. About  
1700.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*





Pair candlesticks (1694) ; a silver fireplace with fender and irons ; wall sconces for candles (1700) ; bleeding cup (1688) ; pitcher (1749) ; tea caddy (1754) ; chocolate pot ; chamber candlestick (1700) ; wine taster (1690) ; kettle ; gridiron ; tongs and spoons ; stewpan ; caudle cup or porringer (1664).

The workmanship is delightfully delicate in the case of most of the examples. The charm of a silver bric-à-brac cabinet lies chiefly in its infinite variety. As soon as a man or woman begins to specialise in bric-à-brac the hobby may begin to pall. 'Twere better far to avoid the one idea and so keep an open mind and a keen eye for anything, and everything, that may come along.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### SAMPLERS

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"Come, bring your sampler, and with Art  
Draw in't a wounded heart,  
And dropping here and there;  
Not that I think that any dart  
Can make yours bleed a tear,  
Or pierce it anywhere;  
Yet do it to this end, that I  
May by  
This secret see  
Though you can make  
That heart to bleed, yours ne'er will ache  
For me."

SO sang Robert Herrick (1591-1634) in the "Hesperides" ("The Wounded Heart"), proving that the making of a sampler was a favourite and fashionable pursuit of his time; but there is earlier mention of the sampler than in the lines we have quoted. In his "Garlande of Laurell," John Skelton (1460-1529)—who styled himself "Poeta Skelton laureatus"—alludes to "the saumpler to sowe on, the lakis to embraid." Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), in simulated despair, thus wails in his "Arcadia":

“ Alas then, O Love, why doost thou in thy beautifull sampler sette such a worke for my desire to take out, which is as much impossible.”

William Shakespeare puts this conceit into Helena's mouth in “ *Midsummer Night's Dream* ” (Act III, Scene 2) :

“ We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,  
Have with our needles created both one flower,  
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion.”

And in “ *Titus Andronicus* ” (Act II, Scene 4) the immortal playwright, by an illuminating adjective, aptly shows that the embroidery of minute design not only demanded patience but was also a trial of the temper :

“ Fair Philomela, she but lost her tongue,  
And in a tedious sampler sew'd her mind.”

Documentary evidence acquits the poets of writing at random. In the household accounts of Elizabeth of York (1465-1503), (the Queen of Henry VII.) occurs the entry : “ To Thomas Fissch, for an elne of lynnyn cloth for a sampler for the Quene, viijd.” In an inventory of the goods of Edward VI., drawn up at his death in 1552, will be found—as Mrs. Palliser notes in her “ *History of Lace* ” (1902)—these details : “ Item, xii samplars ” ; “ Item, one samplar of Normandie canvas, wrought with greene and black silke ” ; “ A book of parchment containing divers patternes.” One of the most definite, as it is one of the earliest (if not, indeed, the earliest) mentions of

a sampler is made in the will (proved on May 25, 1546) of Margaret Thompson, of Frieston, Lincolnshire, wherein the testator states, "I gyve to Alys Pynchebeck my systers doughter my sawmpler with semes."

As to the word "sampler," it is derived from the Latin *Exemplar*, and according to the great lexicographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson, "it is sometimes written sampler." The origin of the sampler is unknown, but the class of embroidery to which it belonged must have been practised in remote ages. The mummy-cloths of the ancient Egyptians were sometimes embroidered in elaborate fashion. However, we need not put the antiquity of the sampler so high as that. Some writers consider that the English sampler is of foreign origin, amongst them Mrs. Head, who in an article in *The Reliquary* (1902) is of opinion that it is of Italian origin. We incline to the belief that it probably originated in many countries independently, and that in any case the English sampler owed nothing to foreign sources: it carries, so to speak, its own hall-mark. In the vast majority of instances the workmanship is too original and characteristic to warrant the suggestion that it was borrowed from other lands. However this may be, there is one specimen of the close of the sixteenth century which is rightly housed in the London Museum, while the Textiles Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, possesses one dated of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, which was presented to it in 1915 by Mr. F. Leverton Harris, M.P. Its main subject consists of "a representation



of St. Veronica holding the sacred napkin, with Golgotha below."

What has become of all the Elizabethan samplers to which references have been made by our poets and writers? We know during the Virgin Queen's reign that the craze for needlework was so great that Philip Stubbes, the Puritan pamphleteer, writing in the "Anatomie of Abuses" (1583) says men "were deck'd out in fineries even to their shirts, which are wrought throughout with needleworke of silke curiously stitched with open seams." The Countess of Wilton in the "Art of Needlework" (1848) mentions that "various books of patterns of needlework for the assistance and encouragement of the fair stitchers were published in those days" (that is in Elizabeth's). In 1591 Vinciolo's work was published in English, "New and Singular Patternes and Workes of Linnen, serving for patternes to make all sortes of lace, edginges and catworkes. Newly invented for the profits and contentment of ladies, gentlemen and others that are desirous of this Art." In view of the scarcity and costliness of books in those days, it is quite likely that the patterns were copied in needlework, and thus became samplers.

We have seen that two specimens may possibly be dated from the close of the sixteenth century, but as this is perhaps conjectural, it can reasonably be contended that the sampler recorded in *Notes and Queries*, December 23, 1899, is the earliest extant English example. It is there stated by Mr. W. Elliot Harrison, of Fort Maddison, U.S.A., that he owned a

sampler worked by his ancestress, Mary Harrison, aged nine, in 1622, which bore the lines :

“ In Sharon’s lovely rose  
Immortal beauties shine,  
Its sweet refreshing fragrance shows  
Its origin divine.”

As he will discover in due course, the collector of to-day will find some difficulty in obtaining a sampler earlier than the second half of the seventeenth century, and even if he succeed he will probably have to pay a high price for it. Examples of Stuart samplers are rare, as a visit to South Kensington will show. The earliest dated sampler at the Victoria and Albert Museum is 1643. It is embroidered on linen “with coloured silks and white linen thread partly in satin and cross-stitch. It is also decorated with cut and drawn work filled with needlepoint stitches. At the top are seen horizontal bands of varying width, containing wavy stems bearing roses, honeysuckle and other flowers, acorns, fruit and S-forms, the letters of the alphabet, and the date Ana Do 1643, all worked in colours. Below are fourteen bands containing geometrical and floral patterns, including lozenges and zig-zag stripes, five being worked in white linen thread, and the remaining nine in cut and drawn work.”\* It measures 3 ft.  $3\frac{3}{4}$  in. in length and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. in width.

Nearly all the early Stuart samplers are of similar proportions, long and narrow, but the Victoria and

\* “Catalogue of Samplers.” Victoria and Albert Museum: Department of Textiles. 1915.

Albert Museum possesses two of early seventeenth century work, one of which is nearly square in shape, measuring  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. by  $5\frac{5}{8}$  in., and the other  $19\frac{1}{2}$  in. in length by  $11\frac{3}{4}$  in. A sampler in our possession, dated 1664, which measures 3 ft. in length by 7 in. in breadth, is divided, like those in the Victoria and Albert Museum, by horizontal strips. Another sampler, dated 1667, of about the same length and width has pictorial work. In it are depicted Adam and Eve in hairy garments, with silken mops of hair. Some of the flowers are worked separately, petal on petal, and then applied to the sampler. None of the samplers of this period (1640-1700) have borders, and we believe that none is known with one earlier than the eighteenth century.

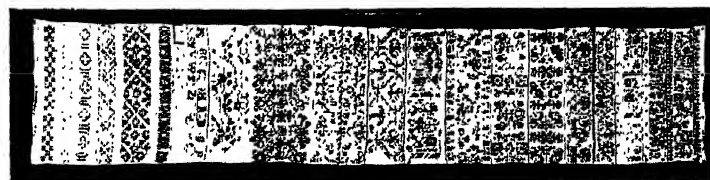
Mrs. Head in her book "The Lace and Embroidery Collector" (1920) mentions that the stitches employed in the seventeenth century samplers are "back stitch, flat satin stitch, a close lace stitch (buttonhole) worked on the surface of the linen, and cross stitch, but occasionally tent stitch, cushion stitches of various kinds, and French knots, are also introduced, many of these stitches being worked so as to show the same on both sides of the material. The silks used are soft and very slightly twisted."

Those patterns which were largely in vogue in the seventeenth century were adorned with floral and geometric designs, in addition to those mentioned. The pineapple, Indian pink, strawberries and acorns, are all characteristic of this era. Obviously the acorn commemorated the Boscobel Oak in which Charles II. hid himself after the battle of Worcester (1651).

## PLATE 19.

## SAMPLERS.

1. Sampler dated 1737.
2. Stuart Sampler, dated 1664.





Some of the Stuart specimens contain nothing but examples of stitches, embroidery and the alphabet.

Early in the eighteenth century the alphabet grew predominant, little space being given to conventional flowers and bands of ornament. The sampler itself now became more square in shape, and a small border makes its appearance. This was soon followed, perhaps in consequence of the religious fervour excited by the crusades of John Wesley and George Whitfield, by moral maxims and pious verses. A sampler dated 1737—a year after Wesley's hymns were published—contains the following :

“ Mary Nicols is my name  
And England is my nation,  
Retford is my dwelling-place,  
And God is my salvation.”

Another sampler dated 1748 is expressed in the same spirit. At the top is the alphabet, followed by the words, “ The time may come ere it be long that I may truly say, I wish I had more learning got and minded less my play.” It is signed “ Ann Dobson, 1748,” and at the foot is the Lord's Prayer. The whole is enclosed in a narrow band of zig-zag work. The lettering is almost identical with that of the Stuart samplers. Most of these are worked in cross-stitch on canvas or linen of a deep cream shade.

Late eighteenth century samplers see the introduction of the darning stitch, and the fabric used is harder in texture and of a deep creamy tint ; this was followed by what is known as tammy cloth. Map samplers came into existence about 1770, most of them

with a border of flowers. Some of these are beautifully worked and infinite pains and attention must have been spent not only on the map but also on the borders. Some were worked in silk on paper, but few of these have survived the wear and tear of time. The sampler of the latter portion of the eighteenth century departs farther and farther from its original purpose, which was to instruct in the art of needlework. The border becomes larger and is generally worked in flowers such as the rose and lily, but the forget-me-not was always a great favourite. Less and less space is devoted to the alphabet ; instead we have houses, trees, beasts, birds and sometimes men, women and children. Verses still occupy some of the fabric, and most of these samplers have the name and date of the worker. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a further development of the pictorial arts as applied to samplers. One with which we are acquainted contains nothing but a scene representing the offering up of Isaac by Jacob. In a corner there is the ram caught in the thicket, and on the top is the eye of God, with long beams of light directed towards the sacrificial altar.

The nineteenth century saw the end of the sampler, there being few, if any, after 1860. Berlin wool-work supplanted it for a brief time until this, too, vanished. It would be more correct to attribute the decline of the sampler to the general neglect of needlework, and partly to the heavier demands of school home-work and partly to the natural preference, in the circumstances, for outdoor recreation.



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## CHAPTER XV

### LITTLE BOXES

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THE wonderful craftsmanship and costly material expended on the snuff-boxes de luxe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have given them an unique place among treasures of applied art, and they are hardly to be "collected" nowadays.

They had, however, a host of charming contemporaries less ornate and less valuable which are more lovable than the *tours de force* of the goldsmiths, enamellers, and gem-setters. Really some of these masterpieces are so perfect as to be "faultily faultless"! For everyday use and for the "plain man" the boxes of ivory, tortoiseshell and horn were very suitable and admitted of endless variety in the way of decoration. These are described in Chapter III. But besides the snuff-boxes, there were boxes and cases for the ladies of the time daintily ornamented in much the same way. Boxes for patches, for powder, for sweetmeats, étuis for their small needlework appliances, pocket toilet cases for tweezers, nail-trimmers and such things, and a multitude of other oddments. They had some excuse of usefulness, but were mainly just

pretty trifles which formed the subject of a conversation or an occasion for a well-turned compliment.

Patch-boxes may be known by the tiny mirrors which will be found in the lid—a necessary part of the equipment, because the patch-box was carried about in the pocket, so that if, owing to the heat or any other cause, the “mouche” should be detached, another could be at once put in its place. These tiny glasses give only a very sectional view of the countenance and fail to supply a general idea of the appearance as do some of the slightly convex glasses in the toilet cases; however, they answer their purpose perfectly. A great many of these little patch-boxes are made of Battersea enamel, and for these reference should be made to Chapter XII. which deals with that material. Others are made of tortoiseshell ornamented with “piqué” work in gold or silver. This method of decoration is especially well suited to such objects, which can be held in the hand and closely examined, as it is not very showy but appeals by its delicate charm. In its simplest form it consists of a multitude of tiny metal points inserted in the shell, either broadcast, or in lines, stars or some other simple device. A modification was the use of flat wires set on edge and bent to any design required. This admitted of an endless variety of patterns, and some of them are extremely ingenious in the application of the natural shapes taken by the metal ribbon when bent with tiny pliers, to form little flowers, leaves, the plumage of birds and so on, but they have not the air of high-bred restraint of the simpler kind. Still another variation was to

cut out the pattern in sheet metal and on this silhouette to engrave any further details necessary to elucidate the design. The process of inlaying in all its varieties was facilitated by softening the shell by moderate moist heat so that the metal could be pressed into its place instead of requiring a bed to be prepared for it, as would be the case with most materials. Gold piqué is generally older than silver and was most often used with fine blonde shell, silver showing up better on the dark. Piqué is sometimes counterfeited by gold paint on the surface, but the difference of the process employed is very obvious and should not deceive anyone. Piqué patch-boxes are often in gilt metal as to hinges and catch, partly no doubt from economy, partly because the harder material is really more suitable for such purposes. They are generally lined with pink or cream-coloured silk of a fine satiny texture, perhaps because these shades gave an idea of how the patches would look on the fair owner's cheek. The patches were generally round, star-shaped, or like a tiny crescent; sometimes, however, they took more elaborate forms, and an instance is recorded of one being cut to the shape of a coach and four, with postillions all complete. They came to this country, like so many other fashions, by way of France, where they were first worn about the middle of the seventeenth century and continued in use for more than a century. Madame de Genlis tells a somewhat ill-natured anecdote of Madame de Pompadour, who thought that she could instruct Marshal d'Estrées in the art of war. She sent him

a letter enclosing a plan of campaign, marking thereon the movements of the troops with patches. The Marshal unwisely made a jest of this circumstance and aroused the ire of the Marquise, whose resentment was life-long.

Powder-boxes are round and have a second loose lid inside in order that the contents should not be jerked out in the process of opening the outer lid which had to fit tightly to prevent the powder escaping; a compartment was thus formed in the hollow of the lid in which a miniature puff no doubt used to find a home. These boxes are generally of French enamel mounted in gilt metal. We have also seen one of plain tortoiseshell lined with silver gilt, which was very beautifully made; a coronet and an initial had their place on the inner lid.

The *étui* with its dainty contents was a favourite gift in the eighteenth century, and it was carried out in an infinite variety of materials. *Piqué* was frequently used, so was shagreen, both the old kind made from fine skin artificially roughened by having small seeds rolled into it while in a soft condition, and the far daintier looking variety which consists of the skin of a kind of ray shark smoothed and polished. It is dyed a very pretty green colour as a rule, and it is charmingly mottled with various sized spots, which are the remains of the small spines which covered the fish when living. These cases generally enshrine *étuis* of some more precious or more delicate material such as enamel, or gold.

A charming variety of decoration which is very often

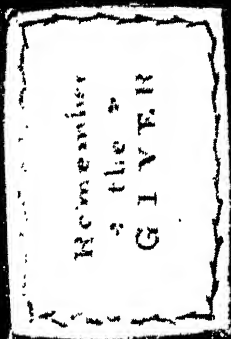
used on gold étuis and other similar objects, especially perhaps châtelaines and watch-cases, is gold work *à trois* or *à quatre couleurs*. The natural colour of the metal is altered by the addition of different alloys so as to give it various tints. Thus silver in small quantities gives a greenish or whitish hue, copper a rosy shade, iron a blue tint, and with this restricted palette the eighteenth century gold worker skilfully built up the most delightful little bouquets in which the colours of the flowers and foliage were indicated by the tints of the gold used. It must, of course, be understood that the colouring was never lifelike, simply reddish-tinted gold was employed for the roses, greenish for the leaves, and so on, but they are not really *red* or *green*. More rarely figure subjects were attempted, with, however, less success. In buying examples of this work it is well to bear in mind that during the early part of the nineteenth century work of a similar kind was produced in considerable quantities. The workmanship often displays a very high standard, but there is a lack of the daintiness of touch which marks early work, and while each little bit seems really well done the whole effect is stodgy and unpleasing.

Ivory boxes are numerous but were decorated very little, the beauty of surface being, as a rule, left undisturbed but set off by a small bit of applied ornament such as a Sèvres or Wedgwood "cameo," a tiny miniature, or a silhouette set in gold and placed in the centre. Locks of hair mounted in ornamental devices were sometimes used, and we may be sure that in such

## PLATE 20.

## LITTLE BOXES.

- 1-4. Patch-boxes. Four representative types in enamel.
5. Étui of gilt metal with Battersea Enamel Plaques. 1750-1760.



2



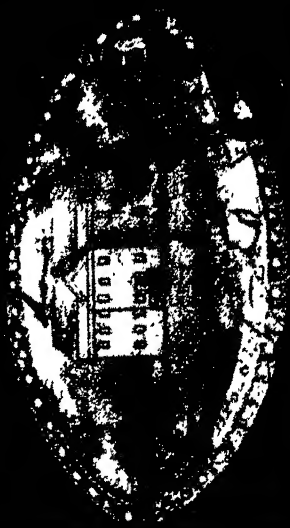
4



5



1



3





cases the box or étui was a lover's gift and the hair probably "his" and "hers" combined.

Rouge and patch boxes in one were almost a necessity when both were universally worn by young and old. These do not differ very much from patch-boxes in their decoration and general appearance; like them they are small and have a mirror set inside the lid, but the box part is divided in two; each side having its separate lid.

Most charming boxes were made for the purpose of carrying sweetmeats. The French appear to have set the fashion, and in mediæval times pocket-cases were in use for this purpose—they were called "drageoirs" and were carried by men and women alike. Later these little receptacles were known as "bonbonnières." Enamel and the precious metals were naturally the favourite materials, as they could be so easily cleaned.

It is rather difficult to define what constitutes a "bonbonnière," as, of course, almost any small box could be used for the purpose, but generally speaking it may be taken that they are of rather larger capacity than most snuff-boxes, especially as regards depth, and are not made to close as tightly, as it was, of course, not necessary that they should be so close-fitting. Among them are many delightful examples of painted enamels, both French and Eng<sup>l</sup>ish. They are generally mounted in gilt metal: if in doubt as to the nationality of the box, the hinge should be examined. It will be found that in French mounts the pin is generally exquisitely capped over, while the English hinge shows the section of the pin in the tube.

There were numerous other kinds of small boxes, but many of them are "a law unto themselves" and they are exceedingly difficult to classify; almost all, however, have some point of interest, either the skill of the workman who made them or the purpose for which they were made.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### TEA-CADDIES AND OTHER BOXES

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TO the collector who has not a very long purse or a great deal of room, boxes offer a most attractive field. Of course the earlier and more splendid caskets are only to be found in Museums, and he would do wisely to specialise in the numerous and charming cases which were made in such numbers by the craftsmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There would be plenty of variety in such a collection, as the purposes for which these boxes were made are innumerable. Tea-caddies, work-boxes, knife-boxes, shaving-cases, boxes for spirits, scents, laces, writing-materials—the catalogue might be extended almost indefinitely,—and each kind has its individuality.

Bible-boxes of oak adorned with carving in low relief may well begin the series. It is not at all certain that the boxes generally so called were, as a matter of fact, ever intended by their makers to be used to store the volumes of Holy Writ, but many of them certainly were used for the purpose, and it is a convenient term for describing the shallow, flat-lidded oaken boxes of the Jacobean period. They are in

many cases quite plain, but the interesting examples have designs carved on the fronts. The carving is generally of a very simple character and is almost always quite primitive in execution. It is, however, well suited to its purpose as anything of an elaborate kind would put to shame the simplicity of the construction. The patterns are similar in character to those on the oak chests of the same period and are almost always geometric. There is no attempt at modelling or any relief beyond the general level of the wood. The treatment consists of lowering the background slightly and diversifying the remaining surface with veinings and simple incised work. The lid always projects over the sides and so does the bottom, but in a lesser degree. The hinges are of iron and are fixed on the inside and are quite plain, the ornamental character of Gothic ironwork having been abandoned by the seventeenth century.

Boxes of similar shape, though very different in their style of decoration, were made in late Stuart times. They differed too in their purpose, for they were for laces or "bands." These boxes were intended to stand on the chests of drawers of walnut veneer which were then so fashionable, and were ornamented to be in keeping with them. Thus, they may be found edged with simple herring-boning or inlaid in multi-coloured woods in designs of birds, flowers and arabesques, while some of the most charming are covered with oystering of cross sections of laburnum. These boxes are decorated on the sides and top as well as the front. Locks and keys should be viewed with

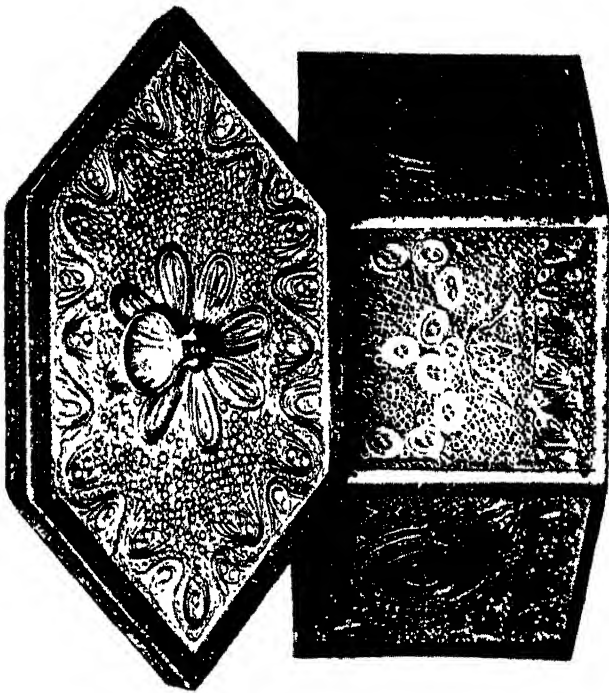
great suspicion, few are original, and many are not even copies of original designs. In Queen Anne's time tea became a really fashionable beverage and the appurtenances of the tea-table were carefully thought out. Tea boxes were made to hold the bottles of silver or oriental porcelain in which the leaf was usually stored, but occasionally small square boxes are to be found lined with thin lead, that must have been made for this purpose. They are veneered with walnut, edged with herring-bone and are fitted with locks and little pierced brass escutcheons, and have small loop handles on the top. The first piece of mahogany brought to this country is traditionally said to have been made into a candle-box, and this was the precursor of an enormous number of boxes of this wood which were made throughout the eighteenth century in every successive style of cabinet work.

Chippendale, for instance, designed several tea-caddies in a very characteristic Rococo style, displaying in miniature all the vagaries with which at times he over-ornamented his side-tables and chairs. Generally, however, the wooden tea-caddies of the solid mahogany period are quite simple, relying for their appeal on their pleasant outlines, beautiful wood and well-chased and finely-proportioned brass handles. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the number of caddies and boxes increased enormously and every kind of fancy wood was used either to construct or ornament them. They often had metal mounts of silver or Sheffield plate. These are not often hall-marked; I do not know why, as they often contain a fairly consider-

## PLATE 21.

## TEA-CADDIES.

1. Hepplewhite Box with silver handle.
2. Tea-caddy, ornamented, with rolled paper.



2







able weight of metal. Inlay and stringing were the favourite methods of decoration, and we find numerous pretty boxes with fans, shells and other devices in rounds and ovals on the tops. Rather more interesting because more individual are those in which the inlay forms a special design suited to the proportions of the particular box. One of the writers has a small medicine chest of this class which closely follows a pattern in Hepplewhite's book. It is veneered all over with various fine woods, used with great taste. The main part is harewood (sycamore stained with oxide of iron and cut a particular way of the grain); rosewood is used for the banding and a sunflower-like ornament in the middle, and holly for the husks. The beautiful silver handle is to be noticed as a detail worthy of a piece probably carried out by Hepplewhite under the direct inspiration of Adam. The lining is of pink velvet and the gimp is the usual silvery kind. Little medicine chests were a favourite fad of the great ladies of the eighteenth century, and they dosed their children and other helpless dependents with more zeal than knowledge. When reading of some of the concoctions they prescribed one finds two endless sources of surprise, firstly that anyone should have had the courage to take them, and secondly that, having done so, they should have survived to tell the tale. Very typical of its period is a rather earlier medicine box which is of particular interest. Not only is it charming in itself, but being dated and inscribed with the name of its original owner, it has a value as a historical document. On the brass nameplate is engraved "Susannah

## PLATE 22.

## BOXES.

1. Sheraton Knife-box.
2. Knife Urn, late 18th Century.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*
3. Queen Anne Toilet-box. Pine veneered with walnut.



1



2



3



Jesser" and the date "1733." The box is covered with shagreen, which is a kind of leather which has been roughened by having small round seeds rolled into it. (There is also another kind of shagreen made from the skins of various spiny fish smoothed and polished.) The box contains six bottles and two "tun-dishes." Knife-boxes of the same period were carried out in exactly the same way, the lids generally sloping towards the front, in accordance with the internal fittings, which were arranged so as to show off the contents to the best advantage.

During the last quarter of the century the decoration of the tea-caddies, knife-boxes, shaving-cases and the hundred and one other kinds of cases, must have given employment to a large number of workpeople. They were very often veneered in satinwood and then further decorated by painting or inlay, and in many instances are in a small way triumphs of the cabinet-maker's art; the way in which the woodwork of the urn-shaped knife-boxes is interlocked so as to preserve the shape without any risk of warping is in itself a study. Sheraton in his book refers to these knife-boxes as being a speciality of certain tradesmen. The more ordinary knife-boxes of the sloping-lid type are not uncommon, but nevertheless are often beautifully finished, and it is a thousand pities to remove the original fittings and turn them into stationary cabinets. From about 1775 and during the first quarter of the nineteenth century amateurs were fond of decorating tea-caddies in a curious way, which has really far better results than most of the "minor arts" then practised.

It is certainly trivial, but the boxes have a considerable amount of charm, and when they have not suffered too much from dust, they are decidedly dainty and pretty. These caddies are almost all six-sided and prepared exactly as if for veneer, each panel being banded round the edge. The central portion is, however, filled up with tiny rolls of paper gummed into place and so arranged as to form part of the pattern, generally a variant of the husk festoon. Classic urn shapes are often introduced, as the object of the worker naturally was to carry out the fashionable designs of the time as nearly as the exigencies of the material would allow. The rolls of paper were of course of different sizes and by squeezing them different shapes were obtained—some round for backgrounds, and others like leaves or flower petals. Considerable skill must have been required to ensure that the rolls were of exactly the right size to take their proper place in the pattern. Originally the papers were of different colours, such as pale pink, blue, gold, brown and buff, but in many cases the whole has faded or burnt to an even tone of brown. We remember once being shown one of these boxes as being “a curious kind of leather work.” There is no way of cleaning them when once the colour has been lost, and it is of course fatal to attempt to use water in any way, brushing with a soft dry brush is the utmost that should be attempted. Some of these boxes are decorated with tiny miniatures, Wedgwood “cameos,” coloured engravings and such small ornaments framed into the top and sides. The metal mounts are often of silver or Sheffield plate

slightly decorated with cut and wriggled work. There should be a presser inside the box similarly decorated to the outside, and this often shows what the original colouring of the outside has been.

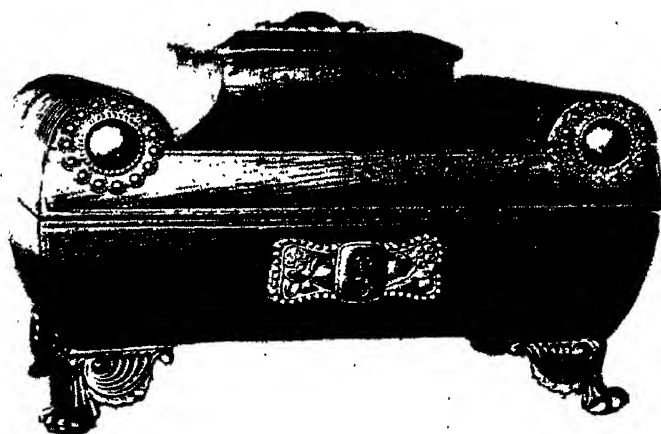
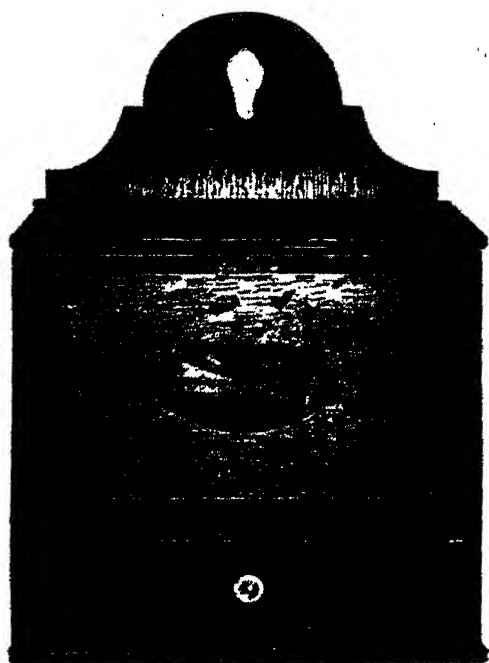
Rather later, at the very end of the eighteenth century, leather-covered boxes of a particular kind were very fashionable. As a rule they seemed to have been intended for work-boxes and often retain their original fittings. They do not display any high standard of craftsmanship, but they are quite pretty in a perfunctory "lady-like" kind of way. These were made in a great variety of patterns, but all are of much the same class of design, though differing much as to details. They are of wood covered with thin leather, stretched and pressed so as to follow the exact contour of their foundation, and many are further adorned by patterns stamped into the leather and gilt. The mounts are of gilt metal stamped in various patterns in relief. The feet are often made of material which is too thin to stand even the careful usage to which the majority of these boxes has been exposed. The leather is generally red or green and no doubt was at one time very brilliant in tone; but now the tints are softened and subdued by time. The outline is almost invariably reminiscent of the Sarcophagus. Anything which recalled the days of ancient Rome had become very popular in France during the Directory and still more so, if possible, during the Napoleonic era, and England has always been a follower of over-Channel fashions. These boxes are fair examples of the "English Empire" style, and like so much furniture

## PLATE 23.

## BOXES.

1. Inlaid oak Salt-box with spice-drawer.
2. " Ackerman " Work-box, wood covered with red leather.







and jewelry of the period, there is a great deal of show and elaboration of detail, but little of real interest as to workmanship or invention when more closely examined. In fact the more one looks into these work-boxes, the less satisfactory do they seem. There is none of the loving care spent on little-seen points, such as marks the work of earlier periods when the craftsman felt a personal pride in his output.

These boxes, however, are interesting in their own way as relics of a bygone day, epitomising in their small compass the style which for a decade was considered the very height of good taste.

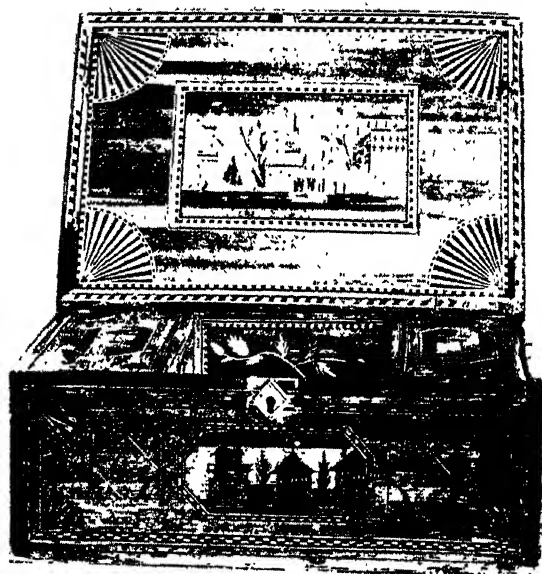
They are almost always fitted up as work-boxes, and are lined with green, dull surfaced paper and in the lid there is often a print on some textile material. One of mine has an engraving of Justice holding her scales surrounded by a wreath of flowers. The box illustrated has an engraving of a lady in classical dress playing with a child. Similar prints on paper were published by Ackerman about 1810, and they were very fashionable as "transfer" decoration on Liverpool porcelain and also on fans.

Strawwork boxes too are relics of much the same period; they have a human interest beyond the not inconsiderable dexterity which they display, for they are mostly the work of the French prisoners at the times of the Napoleonic wars, when our present allies were "*the enemy*." These poor fellows beguiled the tedium of their captivity, and added, moreover, some little luxuries to their scanty fare, by following as far as they were able their different crafts. Materials

## PLATE 24.

## BOXES.

1. Work-box veneered with coloured straw. Early 19th Century.
2. Bible Box of oak. Late 17th Century.





and tools were, however, scarce, and they were perforce obliged to make shift with any oddments that they could pick up. They carved the bones from their rations into quaint ornaments and trinkets with their pocket-knives and veneered (if the term may be allowed) boxes and other small articles with straws drawn from their palliasses and stained to various shades by means of tobacco juice and coffee. Sometimes other colours are introduced, and it may be that they obtained these shades by soaking coloured rags in water. The straws were immersed in hot water to make them flexible, and then, after being split, they were flattened under pressure, and when dry, cut into the sizes and shapes required and fixed with gum. Some of the more elaborate boxes represent an enormous amount of work and are very miracles of patience, others are comparatively simple, but all have a pleasant mellowness of tone which is very attractive. They must not be confused with the modern Japanese straw-work which has something of the same effect, but is carried out by rather different methods. It may generally be distinguished quite easily by the Oriental character of its designs, which often include a chrysanthemum or birds. If a stiffer treatment is used it will be noticed on examination that the straw has been applied to paper before being attached to the object, the decorative effect being obtained by cutting sections from sheets of variously arranged patterns and fitting them together in a way somewhat recalling crazy patchwork of thirty years ago. The elaborate specimens of "prisoner" straw-

work, when they introduce anything of a pictorial character, generally show a small landscape picked out in the tiniest fragments of straw, each individually affixed in its appointed place.

Of course the boxes described above are but a few out of the many kinds which may be discovered, but they may be taken as fairly typical of their respective groups. It would, however, be easy to make this chapter double the length without exhausting the material available.



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## CHAPTER XVII

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### TEA TRAYS, PAPIER MÂCHÉ AND PONTYPOOL WARES

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WHEN every fashionable woman and very many men had begun to look upon the "new China drink" as a necessity of existence, naturally all who made any pretence to being in the swim had to set up a proper equipage of kettle, pot, caddy, dishes, and tea-board, all more or less elegant and expensive according to the taste or purse of the owner. As a rule they were kept in the private sitting-room or dressing-room, where the tea-drinking took place, and where the cups, or "dishes" as they were then called, were washed up. The tray was quite an important item, for, being too large to be tucked away in the corner cupboard or in the buffet, it had always to be in evidence.

No doubt, when it was possible to obtain them, real lacquer trays of Oriental origin were the most prized, but they were scarce and difficult to obtain, and the best substitute was found in the Dutch imitations which followed the originals more or less closely in design.

Very few old trays have come down to us from the days of Queen Anne. This may no doubt be accounted

for by the fact that the constant wear and tear of wiping away the split tea and water would destroy the decoration even of the hardest Oriental lacquer, while the less robust beauties of the European copies, which were after all nothing but gesso enriched with paint and varnish and gilded, would soon vanish.

But the trays of a slightly later date, that is to say of the early Georgian period, have survived in considerable numbers, and they are, perhaps, among the most charming of their species. They are generally round and are cut out of one solid piece of wood—that is to say the raised rim is not added on but the central portion is sunk. Mahogany is almost invariably the wood of which they are made, and they are generally remarkable for the beautiful figure of the grain.

The edge is very often of the type known as “pie-crust,” and we can identify their date by their silver contemporaries in the shape of salvers, many of which—made about 1730—are identical with these trays and the similar tops of tripod tables. Plainer trays of this date have simple round rims not carved or patterned. Before purchasing an example of this kind, be sure to examine the back so as to make certain that it has been intended originally for a tray and is not merely the top of a small table which has lost its base.

Trays of the next type are rather less interesting, as there is not much artistic skill in their design, but they are all the same examples of sound craftsmanship. They are a short oval in shape, rather rounded at the

ends, and the raised sides, which are about 3 in. high, are skilfully added to the base ; they consist of strips of wood bent to shape and let into the body of the tray, which projects slightly all round ; brass handles are attached by screws through the rim. This was a somewhat precarious method and the rim has a tendency to split under the strain. These trays are of fine dark wood and are handsome objects, though devoid of decoration.

The trays of the last quarter of the century are mostly either a somewhat long oval or kidney shape and are made in keeping with the furniture of the period. The less elaborate specimens are of mahogany with a small piece of inlay in the centre, such as an oval with a shell, double fan or urn, but the richer examples have a wealth of ornament in the shape of wreaths of husks and acanthus leaves, loops of ribbons and flowers inlaid in variegated woods either of their own natural colours or stained to a vivid green. The ovals inlaid in such pieces are often extremely elaborate, showing quite complicated designs, such as sprays of oak-leaves and acorns or bouquets of flowers. The rims of many of these trays are made of three layers of wood : the strongest being the centre or core, which is veneered on either side with alternate squares of dark and light wood, so arranged that a dark square on the outside is balanced by a light square inside, which has a very pleasing effect. The handles of these trays are of brass or silver and are generally bent slightly outwards from the rim and are fixed to the base by projections ; a plan which is much

better than the earlier one of attaching them direct to the rim. These trays are reproduced in tens of thousands with every degree of skill, some being really beautifully made, while others are extremely badly done. The poorest copies have the "shell" stained on to light wood instead of being inlaid in numerous small pieces and the whole of the workmanship is careless and slap-dash. The kidney shape is perhaps the favourite pattern for the copyist, as the originals are the most valued. Perhaps contemporary with these or just a little later are the very pretty painted satinwood trays. They are not nearly so fragile as they appear, though, of course, they seldom received rough handling and they have in some instances preserved almost perfectly their original freshness of colour. The reason of this is that in the very best painted furniture—and these trays, of course, were made by the cabinet-makers who produced the contemporary chairs and tables—the decoration is very little raised above the general surface. The painting was carried out fairly smoothly and the surrounding surface was built up to its level by several coats of almost colourless polish, so that the decoration gets really very little more wear than the rest. Often these trays have a central panel, oval in shape, painted in the style affected by Angelica Kauffmann and her contemporaries. This is often in blue and white monochrome or grisaille, the rest of the tray is lightly decorated by wreaths of flowers, ribbons, acanthus trails and sometimes Cupids. These trays must have made charming backgrounds for the lovely porcelain

of the period, but we suspect were only brought into real use on very special occasions.

The most numerous and elaborate of all the trays, however, are those of papier mâché japanned in various colours and ornamented either with paintings of landscapes, still-life groups or figure subjects, flower-pieces in which a certain amount of mother-of-pearl was used or with gilding in a rather severer style.

These trays, as their name denotes, are made of a kind of extremely hard and tough paper-pulp which is so strong that it can be used in much thinner sheets than wood. It is hard, light and not liable to split, and it is rather puzzling why it should ever have gone out of fashion. It made a most ideal ground for the mirror-like surface of "Japan," which was in many cases the chief glory of these trays. This japan was, as a matter of fact, only a very high-grade form of painting and had nothing in common (except a certain similarity in appearance) with the Oriental lacquer with which it claimed relationship. The majority of these trays are hardly a century old and come within the Victorian era. Some people prefer them with pictorial centres in which are landscapes or other subjects painted in the same manner as if the ground were a panel or canvas. These paintings, however, are as a rule of an inferior order and if they were to be judged as pictures would certainly find few admirers. They are therefore not good from a pictorial point of view, and as they lack truly decorative qualities it is difficult to see why they should be valued just because they are painted on a tray, but by certain

collectors they are considered as great treasures and certainly fetch the highest prices.

The most effective from a decorative point of view are the trays in which slips of pearl are embedded in the japan and used as a ground for the principal features of the painting. The most brilliant results ensue from the use of transparent glazes, as the pearl shows through with a soft luminous glow which makes the designs of roses and tropical birds, which generally are the subjects of this treatment, very attractive.

We are indebted to Mr. W. A. Young for the historical and technical information which follows regarding the introduction, and manufacture, of papier mâché wares, for many articles, in addition to tea trays, came to be made in this material.

Papier mâché, in spite of its name, is not of French origin; the real inventor was a certain Clay of Birmingham, who secured a patent for his invention at the end of the eighteenth century. At first the wares were principally flat—trays and waiters for example—but as the possibilities of the material became recognised other inventors took it in hand and began to work on shaped models. Among the more successful was a firm trading in Birmingham as Jennens & Bettridge. They produced papier mâché hollowware, such as work-boxes, bowls for flowers, inkstands and novelties in variety. This firm also took out a patent for mother-of-pearl inlaying, and thereby opened up a new field. Pulp papier mâché was a development of the original process, but it was inferior in strength and

took a less brilliant finish. The very best wares were built up of sheets of a spongy grey paper, which were pasted one on top of the other with an agglutinant composed of flour and glue. The base of the article was a mould of cast brass or iron, the face of which was greased with Russian tallow. The first sheet of paper was damped and carefully pressed by hand on to the mould, and then, after an application of the paste, a second sheet was carefully pressed on the first. The model so covered was next dried in an oven, or room, in which a temperature of 100° F. was maintained. The exposed surface was then roughened with a fine rasp or a coarse file, and additional layers of paper were added to the original base. The operations of thickening and drying were repeated as many times as were necessary to get the predetermined final substance. Then the article was stripped from its support and immersed in a mixture of linseed oil and tar spirit, which rendered the material proof against moisture and damp. After another drying at a much higher temperature the shell was ready for final shaping either in the lathe or by rasping and sandpapering.

It was then ready for its coating, which was made with lamp-black and tar varnish. Each coat had to be stoved, and when the desired thickness had been attained, the hard skin was rubbed down with pumice stone and water until the surface was absolutely smooth. Then the artist decorated it, his, or her, work being protected by a coat of transparent copal varnish, which was also stoved. The final polish was

done by women, who applied rotten stone and water with the bare hand.

The pearl inlay was a simple matter, but it entailed more work in finishing. The scales, cut to shape, were fastened to the naked paper by a suitable varnish, so as to form patterns appropriate to the piece. Then the tar varnish and lamp-black was applied to the interstices, coat upon coat, until the medium just covered the edge of the pearl. Then the whole was rubbed down with the pumice block and finished with rotten stone. Any additional decoration in the way of colour, or gold leaf, was then applied and the work was completed by copal varnishing and hand-polishing as in the case. Some of the prettiest examples of papier mâché are the card trays, which were frequently mounted with nicely designed swinging brass handles, which were given an ormolu colour.

Ten years after the Great Exhibition of 1851 papier mâché was being produced in Birmingham by modifications of the original methods. From "England's Workshops," which was published in 1864, we learn that there were then no fewer than five grades of papier mâché. The original method of superimposing sheets of paper upon each other up to as many as forty thicknesses, was still regarded as the best practice, but flat articles were being produced by pressing paper-pulp between top and bottom dies. Material of a coarser quality was made from fibrous ingredients, and was chemically treated to render it incombustible. What was known as carton-pierre was a paper-pulp

mixed with whiting and glue and this could be shaped



in plaster moulds. Even more plastic was Martin's patent ceramic papier mâché described as "a new composition," and an unholy mess of paper-pulp, resin, glue, drying oil and sugar of lead. It was the old story once more repeated, of a genuine craft degenerating into mere factory production.

Other papier mâché tea trays are treated with gold and gesso in close imitation of Chinese lacquer; the scarlet examples are very handsome, but must not be confused with the rare early eighteenth century tea-boards decorated in a somewhat similar style. The earlier ones appear, as a rule, to have had thin mahogany as their ground with the solid "dug-out" pie-crust edge.

White or rather ivory papier mâché trays are very delightful; they are decidedly uncommon and are generally extremely well decorated, sometimes in a pseudo-Oriental style possibly copied from a "Famille Rose" tray or dish of porcelain. These were very possibly made to match a tea service, either Chinese or else one of the numerous European imitations.

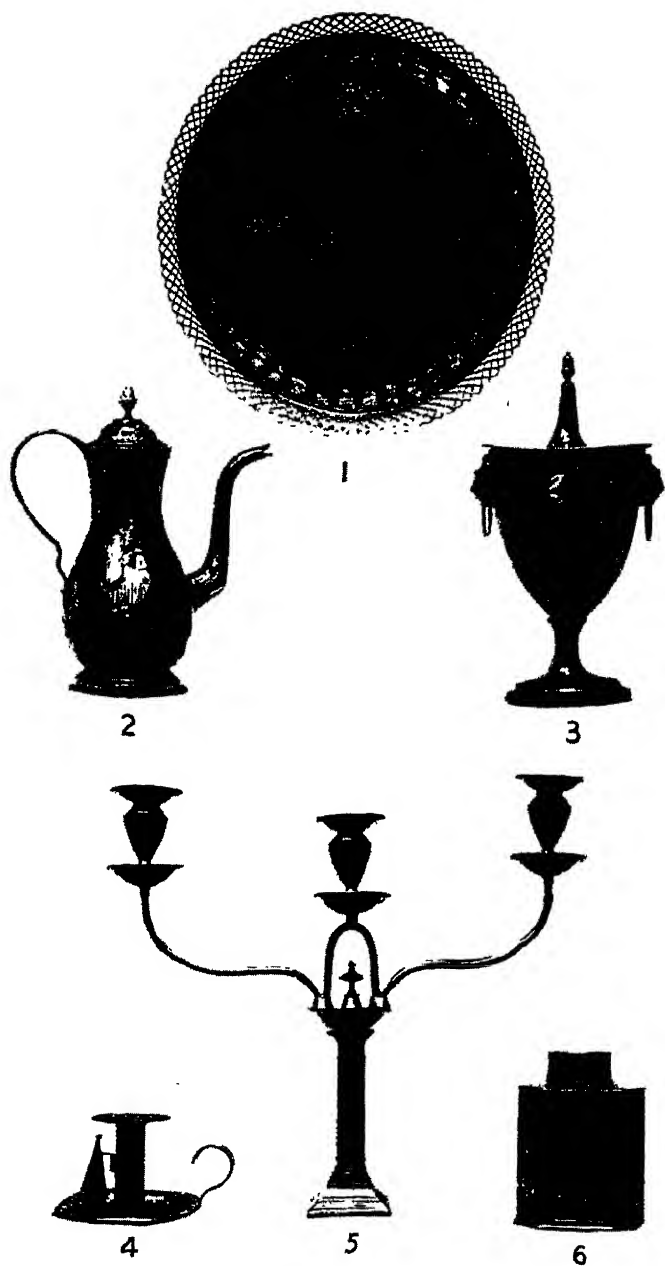
Silver and Sheffield plate tea trays were also made in considerable numbers, they generally followed the prevailing style of other domestic plate, and are extremely handsome possessions. They do not seem to have been made *en suite* with the rest of the silver tea equipages until well on into the nineteenth century, and probably many examples of older patterns which are now used as tea trays were originally intended for wine glasses.

Older than papier mâché, and correspondingly

## PLATE 25.

## PONTYPOOL JAPAN OR LACQUERED WARE.

1. Circular Tray with perforated rim.
2. Coffee-pot.
3. Urn.
4. Candlestick.
5. Candelabra.
6. Tea-caddy.





harder to find in nice condition, is a group of article known as Pontypool and Usk japanware. The art, or craft, of japanning sheet metal is older than that of tinning the iron plate; indeed it is not known exactly when sheet iron was first blackened with a paint or varnish to protect the surface against oxidation. One Andrew Yarranton introduced tinning into this country from Bohemia somewhere about 1670, but for more than forty years the industry was in a precarious condition, and it was not until Major John Hanbury restarted, in 1720, one of the works at Pontypool that the tinplate industry took firm root in South Wales. In the interval a Northampton man, named Thomas Allgood, had settled at Pontypool and, together with his son Edward, had played a part in the new venture. Possibly in despair of making a success of it, father and son turned their attention to other methods of protecting the surface of the metal. The preparation of black lacquer had up to that time been the well-kept secret of the furniture makers, but the Allgoods, so it is said, stumbled on the recipe by accident, and Pontypool japanware became an accomplished fact.

The new trade prospered and other firms began to experiment, and one maker at least, a Mr. Evan Jones, of Usk, Mon., found out how to produce a hard lacquer which took a fine polish and could be decorated. His products were known as Usk wares. The industry was continued in South Wales down to the middle of the last century, by which time the manufacturers in the Black Country had so improved the machinery

for striking the blanks that the Welsh makers were driven out of the market. Pontypool ware is hardly distinguishable from other and later japanned goods, but perhaps its chief characteristic is a subtle rich bronze tint which the gold relief in the decoration has taken on with age. The writer of the present note knows of one beautiful old table-top—the foot is of cast iron—on which is depicted the interior of a church. The dresses of the congregation are done in a variety of colours, while the lighting, through a rose window, is produced by a Rembrandt-like use of yellows and browns. The present owner is a lineal descendant of one of the early Welsh ironmasters, but there is nothing on the table to indicate the exact date when it was made. Probably the best collection of Pontypool and Usk wares in the country is that which has been gathered by the officials of the Welsh National Museum at Cardiff, by whose courtesy a number of representative pieces are shown in Plate 25 facing page 192.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### SILHOUETTES OR BLACK PROFILE PORTRAITS

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WITH the majority Silhouettes are an acquired taste. Many people find them curious rather than charming, possibly because, though mediocre work is sufficiently common, fine specimens are almost as scarce as really fine miniatures. But while the appeal of some of the more superficial excellencies of a miniature, such as its daintiness of colouring and finer finish, are obvious even to the casual observer, the points of a good silhouette are decidedly subtle; and though the difference between the work of an accomplished profilist and the amiable inanities of the "talented amateur" is at once apparent to the lover of silhouettes, it may quite conceivably escape the uncritical eye. It is therefore wise to study fine specimens, the originals if possible, or, if these are not available, black and white gives a very fair idea, as they lose less by reproduction than any other kind of portraiture.

The name of silhouette is now generally applied indiscriminately to all black profile-portraits and also, to a limited extent, to those of other colours when the effect is of a similar character. Fancy groups and

figures are also included under the title, but their interest is generally slight. The essential of a silhouette is that the main subject should be shown in a mass of one tint against a ground of another. The artistic importance of the outline filled in solidly with black, white or a colour displayed against a solid strongly contrasting background was early recognised by the Greeks and Egyptians, but though their paintings resemble the later silhouettes in some particulars and doubtless had a share in making them fashionable by giving them the fashionable touch of classicism so essential in the later part of the eighteenth century, the ancient decorative figures can hardly be considered as the direct ancestors of the modern black portrait.

The actual inventor of the silhouette portrait as we know it is not known and its origin is not clear. In mediæval times cut paper and parchment in ornamental devices were frequently used for different purposes. It is mainly ecclesiastical examples that have survived together with some of heraldic character, and these pieces most probably led to the production of likenesses by the same methods, i.e. by cutting out with a fine sharp knife in the way that a stencil plate is cut. It is but a short step from the picture of a saint or saintly emblem to the portrait of a beloved one, and no doubt it was often taken in early days, but examples do not appear to have survived.

The earliest silhouette portrait that we have heard of is that cut by Mrs. Pyburg of William and Mary in 1699. Dated examples before the middle of the



eighteenth century are particularly interesting and should always be acquired, even if not of much artistic merit, as they give such an accurate idea of the costume and head dress of the period. The end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries is the period when silhouette making was at its zenith both as to numbers of examples and artistically. Soon after the beginning of Victoria's reign, like most other arts and crafts it fell off and examples worth preserving later than 1850 are few and far between.

The term "silhouette" is derived from a French Minister of Finance in the days of Louis XV., Etienne de Silhouette (*b.* 1709, *d.* 1767). He advocated and enforced retrenchments in many departments of the public service, but made himself extremely unpopular by urging personal economy on the Court. He became the butt of the wits, anything mean and poor being christened after him, and cut paper portraits (which were of course the cheapest form of likeness then known) were derisively spoken of as being *à la Silhouette*. He is also believed to have amused himself by drawing outline portraits of his friends, so though he did not invent them, as he is sometimes supposed to have done, he had a share in making them more general.

The name Silhouette was not in ordinary use in England for black profile portraits before the early nineteenth century, and was hardly universally employed here till quite recent years. "Profiles" *tout court*, "Shadow Portraits" or "Shades" seem to have been the accepted names. Profilists have, however, invented

## PLATE 26.

## SILHOUETTES.

1. Painted on paper and finished in gold.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*
2. Cut in black paper, by Edouart.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum.*
3. Painted on paper and shaded in slate colour and gold.
4. A Welsh lady aged 32, 1825. Painted on paper and finished in body colour.



1



2



3



4



most extraordinary terms for describing their art ; shadowgraphy, Papyrolanier, Papyrography are some of these, while they have described themselves as scissortypists and Papyrologists.

A good many people imagine that the best profile portraits are those cut out of black paper and mounted on plain white paper, without any brushwork details, and consider that these alone are worth collecting. Of course this is entirely erroneous, and while we would not go as far as to say that the direct opposite is the case, it is a fact that most of the especially interesting and artistically valuable specimens of cut paper work owe a great deal to brushwork, either in black, gold or colours, and many of the very best silhouettes are entirely brushwork, having no cut paper at all.

The cut paper profile is undoubtedly the most ordinary type. It is the easiest and cheapest kind, demanding of those who merely aspired to do the ordinary work only paper and a pair of scissors, a steady hand and the knack of " catching a likeness," though of course there is also plain cut-work showing exceptional artistry.

The addition of gilding and touches of colour has been held by some people to amount to a confession of weakness on the part of the artist, and they assume that these additions prove that he was incapable of doing without them. Apart from the fact that many silhouettists sometimes worked in plain black and sometimes added paint, it will often be found that if in imagination we do away with the gold touches

the profiles alone are masterly. The brushwork, too, certainly demands a much higher degree of artistic skill than pure scissor work, and as long as it is not carried too far and overdone, it adds considerably to the beauty and value of the example. In our opinion, however, much work on the background detracts from the beauty of the effect, and though many valuable examples have elaborately touched-up scenes, they are generally important because they represent interesting people, not on account of their artistic qualities.

The most extraordinary dexterity in using the scissors is often obtained by the silhouettists, who made a speciality of this method, and the results sometimes can be compared to lace in the fineness of their openwork. But though we may admire and wonder at the technical skill and certainty of hand which has enabled these *tours de force* to be carried out, they do not therefore constitute the most artistically satisfactory specimens. It is in the poise of the head and the beauty of line shown in the drawing of the profile, together with the expression of character and a subtle air of distinction and mastery which distinguish the work of an accomplished silhouettist and mark it off from that of the tyro. No rules can, of course, be given to judge such points. The canons of art which govern our taste when criticising a painting or miniature must be used, as far as they apply, in appraising their humbler cousins.

Silhouettes executed entirely in brushwork are in quite a different category to those cut out of paper, though at the first glance they appear very much

alike. But to the painter a certain tenderness in the drawing of the outline is possible which is unattainable by the most dexterous of scissor men. The most usual ground for the brushwork silhouettist is, of course, paper or card, and on these the ordinary portraits of the middle-class clientèle who flocked in their hundreds to the studios of the popular profilists were executed. It was also used for the larger-sized busts and full-length portraits and groups of more important clients, and many very exquisite portraits are to be found carried out in this manner. But, however masterly the work may be on paper and card, the effect always lacks the delightful mellowness of paintings on ivory or plaster, and these latter are, from the artistic point of view, the most precious of all silhouettes whether carried out entirely in black or with the flesh only in black and the draperies in colours. These are mostly of small size and of the bust only, or at most half-length figure. Other varieties of painted silhouettes are carried out on the back of convex glasses. These sometimes are mounted on a flat card so that the painting stands away from the ground, on which it casts a shadow. Sometimes gilding or silver-foil was applied to the glass after the painting was complete, so that the profile is relieved against a gold or silver ground, and occasionally a coloured ground is used. Sometimes too the hollow was filled with wax or plaster. All these and other similar varieties, though in a way they may be classed as freaks, are interesting, and, if of artistic quality and in good condition, valuable.

The silhouettist who relied merely on his eye and hand for the accuracy of his likeness was an exception. The most usual plan was to take a life-sized tracing of a shadow of the profile and reduce it by mechanical means. The simplest way was, of course, to fasten a sheet of white paper on a wall and outline the shadow of the profile as thrown by the light of a single candle. This primitive method has its inconveniences, and various ingenious contrivances were invented to make the drawing of the shadow easier and more accurate. The main principle of them all was to arrange the paper so that it came between the draughtsman and the sitter; it was thus enabled to be placed almost touching the head and the shadow showed through with a very clear sharp outline. Some of these profile-machines had arrangements to hold the sitter's head steady while the tracing was in progress, so that the artist should not be disturbed by any involuntary movement. The reduction of these large shadows (always a trifle larger than life-size) to the small proportions of the ordinary silhouette was generally made by means of a mechanical instrument similar in principle to, though differing in some details from, that which is now known as a pantograph. Two movable points are connected with a central fixed pivot by means of slips or rods. With one the outline to be copied is followed, and the other, to which a pencil is attached, produces an exact copy but on a more or less diminished scale according to the adjustment of the rods.

By means of these ingenious mechanical contriv-



ances it was possible for a person of little taste or skill to produce passable likenesses, though, of course, destitute of any trace of inspiration, and it is probable that the majority of the ordinary commonplace "shades" were so carried out. Silhouettists of much higher rank, though perfectly capable of doing without them, did not altogether despise the aid of these contrivances. They used them because they saved the time not only of the artist but of the sitter, and the beaux and belles could have themselves easily and cheaply immortalised without any tedious sittings such as were necessary for miniatures or oil-paintings.

Quaint and delightful as silhouettes are, half their charm is lost if they lack their original mounts. It is extraordinary that such a thing should be possible, but we have known silhouettes deliberately taken out of their old frames, though in quite good condition, and put into new ones, more showy perhaps but infinitely less suitable than those which they superseded. Even if the gilding has worn off or the papier mâché is a little rubbed and dull, no desire for uniform freshness should ever lead to the reframing of silhouettes where the original mount has survived. This vandalism can only be compared to that of stripping a book of its "original boards" and re-binding it in red morocco and gilt. The most ordinary types of frame are those made of thin stamped brass of a gadroon pattern, generally round or oval in contour, and the black papier mâché frame of rectangular shape with an internal oval mount of brass and a hanger of floral device, often an acorn. The former is the

older type. Higher in the scale are found, generally in small sizes, the oval mounts of gilt metal, paste, or pearls, similar to those of contemporary date used for ivory miniatures, and square ormolu frames, often with a gilt inner mount surrounding the oval centre opening. These frames will generally be found to contain silhouettes of special interest, often representing persons noted for their rank or beauty, as the ordinary peregrinatory silhouettist naturally favoured a cheaper kind of mount. Perhaps the principal treasures of the silhouette lover are those very scarce and precious minute specimens which were set in pins, rings, brooches, snuff-boxes and other trinkets. Apart from the fact that such special mounting naturally was only used to display work considered to be of a high quality, the minute and delicate work is charmingly set off by the surroundings of gold, pearl, or ivory. Especially delightful are the small tortoiseshell patch or snuff boxes with a gold-mounted silhouette (of course under glass) in the lid.

Besides portrait silhouettes there were also fancy pieces and ornamental groups cut by eighteenth-century silhouettists, both amateur and professional, and these are more generally found in scrap albums than framed for wall decoration. Some people like to take them out and hang them. Personally we think it a pity and much prefer to see them in their original surroundings. However, if their removal is decided on they should not be taken off the paper to which they are gummed, but the leaf should be cut out of the book and framed up as it is. It is rather a moot

point whether such silhouettes should be framed in copies of the old style or not. Our own feeling is that a very simple unobtrusive frame, such as a plain narrow black moulding, is more appropriate, while for round or oval subjects the turned ebonised frames are very becoming. However, very excellent copies of the old styles are obtainable for those who prefer them.

The bulk of the ordinary everyday profile-portraits are unsigned, and except in a very few cases it is thus impossible to assign them to any particular artist. Most of the more important silhouettists and many who had no particular claim to any distinction, however, attached to the back of the work labels of an advertising character giving their names and addresses, and sometimes their prices, in much the same way as old-fashioned photographers used the backs of "carte de visites" for a similar purpose. These most interesting labels should never be separated from the silhouette to which they are attached, and if it should be necessary to re-paper the back of the frame when replacing a broken glass, or in order to make the frame dust-proof, the labels should be religiously replaced. Not only are they of interest as throwing a light on the history of the silhouette, but they add considerably to its pecuniary value, placing its genuineness beyond a doubt.

It is impossible here to give a complete list of silhouette artists, as the numbers are too great. Of most of them very little is known save the particulars that can be gathered from the labels themselves, but a few names stand out as exceptions.

Mrs. Beetham, who did exquisite portraits of ladies, Charles August Edouart, a wonderfully expert silhouettist, who flourished early in the last century. He worked principally in cut paper and generally showed the whole figure in his portraiture. Field, end of eighteenth and early nineteenth century, did very fine work, especially on plaster. He introduced gold pencilling. Gounard of Paris, who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century. He was in partnership with Field for some time. His small portraits for rings and other trinkets are particularly fine. There were many amateurs who amused themselves with silhouette cutting. Princess Charlotte was among these; her work shows a pretty taste and a clever sense of characterisation.

There are, unfortunately, very few books that are of much use to the student. Mrs. Nevile Jackson's "History of Silhouettes" contains much most valuable information and good illustrations (some in colours) of many exquisite specimens. A history of Edouart's career is included and a list of most of the known silhouettists, with concise information concerning them.

The catalogue of the Wellesley Collection, though privately printed, may be seen at the great libraries, and the illustrations will be a revelation to those whose acquaintance with this form of portraiture has hitherto been limited to simple "shades" of the ordinary cottage type.

Edouart published a "Treatise on Silhouette" which is interesting and amusing, displaying in its naïve pages the magnificent assurance and conceit

of the writer, but at the same time there is much that is well worth reading.

Far more useful than works dealing with the practice of the art will be found a reliable work on costume, as it is principally by the dress, hair, and coiffure that we are able to fix approximately the period of the portraits when undated.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### WATCHES

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**S**TRICTLY speaking, a collection of watches is not to be lightly undertaken by anyone who does not wish to spend a great deal either of time or money in pursuit of his hobby. As a rule, fine specimens are not to be "picked up," for a few shillings, or even for a few pounds, as their perfect workmanship and exquisite materials appeal to everyone. Yet there may be found occasionally, perhaps among the forgotten treasures of some old lady's jewel-box, or standing out by reason of its delicate finish, mingled with the heterogeneous collection of oddments that find their way to the "silver table" of a country vicarage, or even brought in to a village clockmaker in exchange for a "Waterbury," some stranded masterpiece of a craftsman of bygone days. From such a situation, if it will not "go," a fine watch may sometimes be purchased at a price which, while it constitutes a veritable bargain to the purchaser, is very satisfactory to the seller.

The most likely "finds" are those with enamelled cases, which have not the obvious intrinsic value of watches of gold set with precious stones. Pinchbeck

watches, if finely worked, are also not to be despised ; Wedgwood plaques of fine quality adorn others, and the outer cases of shagreen and piqué tortoiseshell may turn a plain silver " turnip " into a very charming object.

With the reservation that the collector must not aim too high, these side-tracks of a well-trodden road may be explored with much pleasure, and even if the collector be unsuccessful and the end of the chase does not bring a stag " of points," at least there will be the feeling that the quarry was worthy of pursuit. For watches are a most fascinating subject of study, containing as they do in a small compass masterpieces of artistic craftsmanship with marvels of mechanical ingenuity.

Of course, the true connoisseur of watches finds as much, if not more, interest in the details of the " works " as he does in the beauties of the outer cases, and the history of the introduction of improvements which have made possible the marvellously precise time-keeper of the present day is absorbingly interesting. But while it needs considerable knowledge to understand the niceties of their internal mechanism, everyone can appreciate the exquisite ornamentation and finish which, during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were lavished on their cases.

The invention of portable clocks and watches is ascribed to Peter Henlein of Nuremberg, and the date when they were first made is generally given as about 1500. Those made in the first half of the sixteenth century are exceedingly rare, even in

museums, but the great collections contain a fair number of the delightfully quaint watches of the last half. These were made in such shapes as books, bunches of flowers, ships, animals, balls, crosses and even skulls. The oval watches known as "Nuremberg eggs" appear to have been first made about 1600 in the city from which they take their name; rather later they, with those of circular and octagonal shapes, were made everywhere. In the seventeenth century though watches had become more plentiful, and had, indeed, taken their places as necessities in the equipment of fashionable folk, they were still exceedingly costly, not only on account of the mechanism, but also because of the enamels and gem-work with which, from about 1640, they were very generally decorated. Outer covers, therefore, began somewhere about this time to come into common use. They were often of gold or silver, chased or *repoussé*, but other materials were frequently used, such as leather, shagreen and tortoiseshell. Sometimes a watch has two outer covers—not for simultaneous use, but one more highly decorated than the other for special occasions, as a kind of Court dress.

In addition to the protective covers designed to preserve delicate enamels and precious stones from injury, there are also found plain watches which have a decorated cover which serves to keep dirt and dust from entering the winding-hole.

Enamelled pictures on watches before 1640 are rare. There are only six known in the true Limoges style, three of which are in Mr. Pierpoint Morgan's



wonderful collection. The earlier ones are much quieter in tone than those which are carried out in the later manner associated with Petitot, the celebrated snuff-box painter. The use of enamel continued throughout the eighteenth century, and the minuteness and delicacy with which some of the paintings are finished is almost inconceivable ; on examining them with a high-power magnifier fresh beauties and new details come into view.

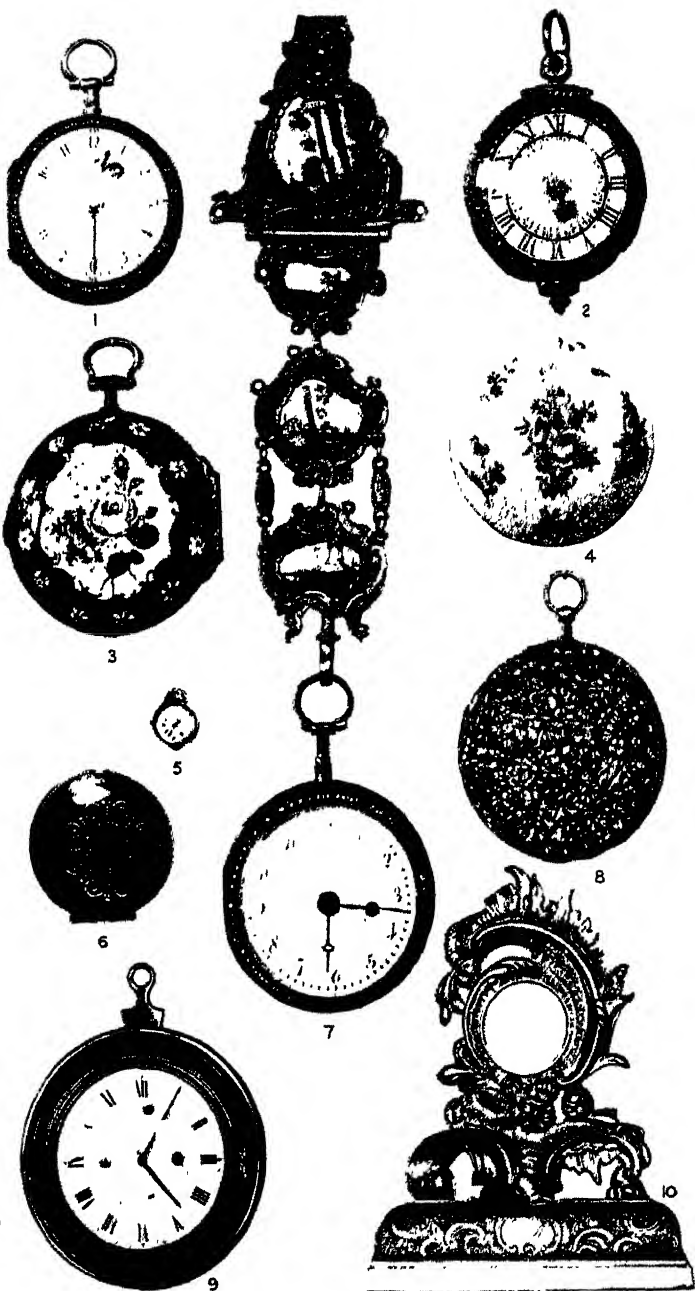
Speaking generally, the most popular subjects were religious in the seventeenth century, classical in the first half of the eighteenth, and pastorals, portraits, cupids and rustic scenes in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The dials and hands, too, have a sequence of their own. The first watches had only one hand (Fig. 2), the minute hand appearing in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, while the seconds indicator is a quite recent innovation, as it came into general use in 1760 or thereabouts. The hour figures at first were shown on a separate band of metal, but gradually the custom of having only one plate became general ; gold or enamelled faces were universal till about 1690, when white dials first appeared. On the first introduction of the minute hand, numbers were introduced outside the hour figures, dividing the hour into periods of five minutes ; these disappeared about the middle of the eighteenth century, though the 15 minutes, 30 minutes and 45 minutes were retained in many cases (Fig. 1), especially in French watches.

Early watches were not intended to be carried in a

## PLATE 27.

## WATCHES.

1. French watch with diamond rim. 18th Century, 1740-50.
2. 17th Century watch with gold and enamel case.
3. Enamelled watch, Battersea. 18th Century, 1750-60.
4. Watch-back of Chelsea Porcelain.
5. Miniature watch set in Bezel of ring.
6. Outer case of a watch. Tortoiseshell Piqué with gold. 18th Century.
7. Châtelaine of Battersea enamel. 18th Century.
8. Watch with case of gold decorated with raised enamel. 17th Century. English. 1630-40.
9. Sedan watch-clock. Late 18th Century.
10. Ormolu watch-stand. Mid-18th Century.





pocket, but were looked upon as ornaments and were worn round the neck on a ribbon or chain. The fancifully-shaped ones were, of course, specially adapted for this, but even comparatively plain ones of round shape often had a projection at the bottom to break the outline, which would soon have worn a hole in the stoutest pocket (*see* Fig. 2). Watch-chains approximate to those in modern use were not introduced till the seventeenth century, and the earliest extant is reputed to have belonged to Oliver Cromwell. No doubt the Puritan objection to display in any form led to the keeping of such expensive objects as watches out of sight, even though they were really necessities.

English watch-makers have enjoyed a splendid reputation for the excellence of the mechanism of their productions, but their decorative powers have not been held to equal those of their French compeers ; still they have some most dainty productions to their credit, such as the watch shown (Fig. 3) with Battersea enamel case, which is at once brilliant and refined. From Battersea, too, come the little plaques which decorate the châtelaine (Fig. 7), the metal-work being beautifully wrought in pinchbeck. The enamelled and jewelled case shown in Fig. 8 is a most exquisite piece of workmanship. The illustration (Fig. 10) shows the value put on watches even in the middle of the eighteenth century, for this, which looks like a small clock of Chippendale design, is really a stand in which the watch could be placed to serve as a general time-keeper when not required for personal wear.

The small hanging-clocks with watch works fixed in mahogany and brass cases about 6 in. across are sometimes called "watch-clocks," or Sedan watches; the latter because they are supposed to have been specially made for use in Sedan chairs (Fig. 9). They were made during the Sheraton period and are most useful objects, even at the present day, as they can so conveniently be hung wherever a reminder of the passage of time is useful.

One of the most sumptuous and magnificent books ever published on any subject was privately printed for the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan as a catalogue of his collection of watches. In the vellum copies, one of which has been accepted by the King, all the illustrations are exact copies of the objects, real gold and silver being used and worked with agate points and dies so as to heighten the illusion. Some of the watches in this collection cost very large sums, and it includes many exquisite specimens, each of which, of course, ranks as a unique work of art.



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## CHAPTER XX

### BEADWORK

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THERE are beads large and beads small, beads that are precious and beads of no intrinsic value whatever, beads that are merely natural objects with holes bored in them, and others which are veritable works of art ; in fact, there is hardly any material that has not been formed into suitable shapes and strung either for ornament or as a means of keeping a record of some kind.

In this chapter we do not propose to deal with anything in which the individual beads have any interest or value. "Beadwork" is here used as a term covering everything which owes whatever value or beauty it may possess to the arrangement of numerous small beads, each of which is of no importance by itself. The lovely and wonderful beadwork of the ancient Egyptians might be held to come under this description, but it is really so entirely different that we will pass it by with just a reference.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century enormous quantities of beads of all sizes were imported into England from Venice and became very much the fashion here. Many of them were mock pearls, which



were much used as personal ornaments. Thus, among the Sloane MSS. (857, "Papers Relating to the Glass-sellers"), we find an English merchant, John Greene by name, constantly sending orders for "pearles" of different sizes. For instance, on September 17, 1669, he ordered "20 bundells of fine good pearle, 10 bundells of fine midle pearle, 10 bundells of fine small seed pearle." No doubt when all the fine ladies of the Court wore their strings of real Oriental pearls in the profusion portrayed by the fashionable painters of the day, those a step lower in the social scale, unwilling to be outdone, donned these "colourable imitations," which, though they probably deceived none, at least gave a very good appearance at a very small cost. But the term "Perle" was also used to describe any kind of smallish bead, and in Stuart times coloured beads were no doubt included in the importations from Venice, because they were then used in various kinds of needlework.

The most remarkable way of using them was in a special kind of embroidery known as "Stump-work." As a rule, Stump-work is carried out entirely in needle-point stitches in silk, the work being so much padded that the design stands away from the ground in high relief, details such as butterflies' wings being simply attached to the ground by the base of the wings as in nature. The work is generally of the finest, and the finish is often something marvellous, but the designs are always childish and the whole conception crude. Still, the naïveté of the drawing and the gaiety of the colour (where this has

not been hopelessly dimmed by time) has its charm.

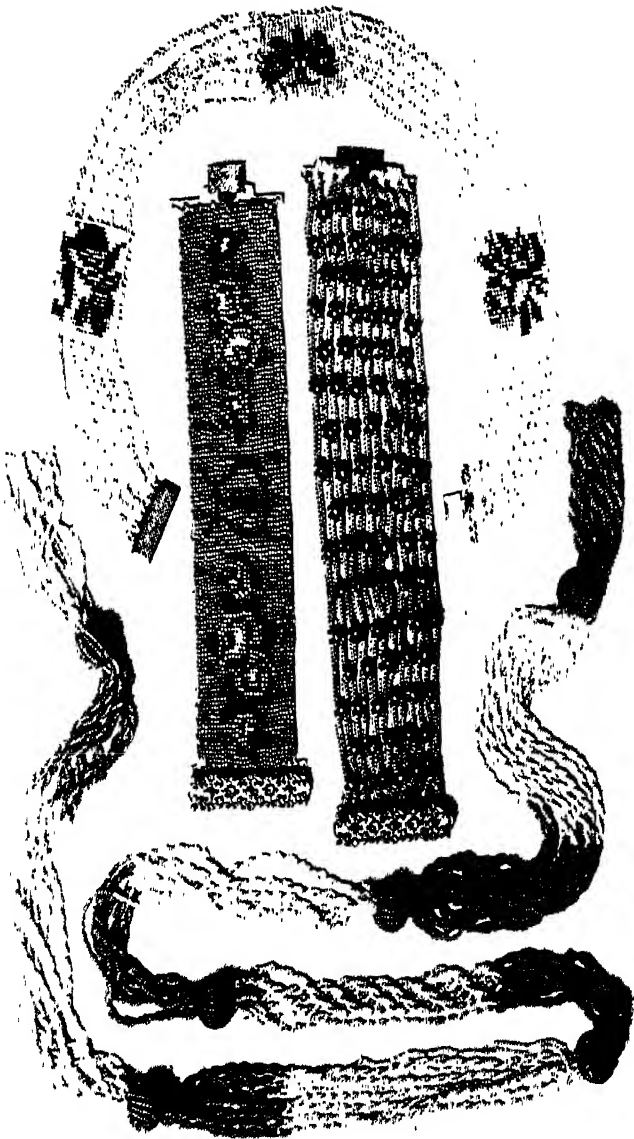
Beadwork examples are very rare, and while following the same general lines as the pieces worked entirely in silk, the detail is, of course, not so fine. Where the beads have not been rubbed off the general effect is as bright as when new, because the beads do not attract dust and the colours, of course, do not fade. The beads used are small in size and of brilliant but not garish colouring. In some pieces button-hole stitch is used, each stitch carrying a bead ; in others the beading is done separately on linen and mounted over padding on to the silk ground; the effect in such examples is more clumsy, as they seem to be detached from the ground. The designs used are similar to those worked in silk needlework, figures, animals and plants all combined in a medley without any attempt at harmonious composition. A very exceptional example covered with bunches of vine-leaves and bunches of disproportionately small grapes shows an unusual feeling for decoration, but, on the whole, these pieces are quaint rather than pretty. The work is most usually applied to caskets or writing cabinets with numerous little drawers and hiding-places, but shallow trays and panels for framing are also occasionally to be met with. This Stuart beadwork however is decidedly rare.

During the eighteenth century and down to the last quarter of it, beadwork was not very popular. A few pieces are to be found in which beads are combined with needlework in carrying out designs of the prevailing fashions, but they are not at all

## PLATE 28.

## BEADWORK.

1. Chain of turquoise-blue glass beads and seed pearls.
2. Knotted silk Bracelet, ornamented with red and gilt beads.
3. Loomed beadwork Bracelet, turquoise-blue with flowers in natural colours.
4. Necklace of clear and chalk-white beads of small size with panels of loom-work. Early 19th Century.





distinctive. After about 1790, however, an enormous amount of beadwork was executed. The general trend of taste was towards simplicity, and necessity imposing cheapness, beadwork was a bright and effective way of making personal ornaments which were decorative yet had not sufficient value to excite envy or cupidity, an important point in Paris at that time.

In classifying these pretty trifles one has to choose between several methods, as they might be arranged according to the different ways that the beads are worked up, chronologically, or by the material out of which the beads are made. On the whole, we think this last is the best. In accordance with this plan those worked in seed-pearls, those carried out in small glass beads, and those composed of or decorated with steel beads are dealt with under separate headings.

### SEED-PEARL WORK

Although in earlier times seed-pearls were much used in ecclesiastical embroidery, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they were mainly used for personal ornaments, and they may be considered as representing the very aristocracy of beadwork, fine examples being very dainty and much treasured by their owners. It is curious that there should be no examples at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where pieces of contemporary work in glass and steel beads abound. Seed-pearls are the very small pearls of various rounded but irregular shapes which cannot be used in the ordinary way for jewelry by reason of their minuteness and lack of symmetry.

They are intrinsically of hardly any value, and the cost is almost entirely that of piercing and stringing, which is a tedious and slow process. In order to turn these insignificant atoms into objects of sufficient size to show off the lustre of their pearly surface it was necessary to mount them on a support, and for this purpose mother-of-pearl was almost always used. It was cut out into the general shape of the ornament—as a rule, leaf-like or shell-like forms were used—and then fretted out into delicate ribs and veins. Tiny holes were drilled in this slight framework, and the pearls were mounted by means of fine white horsehair. Larger irregular pearls are used to give point and emphasis to the designs, which are often of considerable grace and beauty, often recalling lacework by their lightness and delicacy, though actual lace patterns do not appear to have been copied. Some pieces represent floral groups and sprays, and even complete bouquets, but these are not the most refined and appear to me to be among the later examples of this work.

These ornaments were very fashionable during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, and after fifty or sixty years of comparative neglect the work has again been revived. Those of modern manufacture are not of such fine work as those of our grandparents' days, and a poorer class of seed-pearl is generally employed in them ; the large pearls, moreover, instead of being real, though slightly imperfect or misshapen, are more ordinarily false. Imitation pearls were sometimes used in genuine old ornaments, but not very

often. Modern pearl work, too, is generally less well modelled, a state of things resulting from economy in the mother-of-pearl foundation, which is often too flat and rather heavy.

Buyers of antique pieces should see that the horsehair is in good condition. A few strands broken here and there do not matter so very much as they can be repaired easily, but there is an insidious kind of rot which attacks the whole of the horsehair, and this necessitates the renewal of the hair. It can be done, but it is an uncommonly expensive process and detracts something from the interest and value of the piece.

#### SMALL GLASS-BEADWORK

Ornaments of this kind are not worked with horsehair on a solid foundation like the seed-pearls, but are generally extremely flexible, being threaded on very fine silk or cotton before being worked into their ultimate form by knitting, loomwork, or plain stringing. Many of the knitted examples are purses and bags, and a large amount of care and no mean degree of skill must have gone to their making. One of the principal difficulties was to keep the beads all evenly on the right side of the work so as to present a perfectly smooth surface. With each stitch of the knitting, which was done in the usual way, a single bead had to be picked up from the previously strung row. The stringing, too, was a troublesome business, necessitating tedious counting to ensure that each bead was in its right order on the silk ready to be picked up as required to take its place in the pattern.



## PLATE 29.

## BEADWORK.

1. Group of Pearl Ornaments, seed and larger Pearls mounted on Mother-of-Pearl foundation. c. 1810.  
*The property of Miss Margaret Jones-Parry.*
2. Silk Purse ornamented with extremely small cut-steel beads. c. 1830.





The smaller bags and purses are generally fitted with mounts either of silver or of base metal gilt or silvered over. The metalwork is seldom of any interest from an artistic point of view, but silver hall-marked examples are useful as they enable us to date specimens with a considerable degree of exactitude. The designs are generally stamped on to the metal, and are usually wreaths of leaves or minute dots in imitation of the granulated goldwork made fashionable by Castellani's copies of Etruscan jewelry. Similar mounts on a larger scale are used for the bigger bags or "reticules," but these are more ordinarily drawn up by means of rings with a running cord or ribbons passed through a slot. The prettiest beadwork patterns are those in which roses or other flowers in their natural colours are relieved against a background of a contrasting shade, blue inclining to turquoise, opal or ruby being the most usual grounds, though a rich Chinese yellow is sometimes found, and always with good effect. Besides bags of different sizes, neckbands, bracelets and neckchains (used as supports for watches or muffs) were also made of knitted beadwork.

A very characteristic way of using beads was by means of a species of loom. In its essentials it was an exceedingly simple instrument, but the ladies of the early nineteenth century had a pretty taste in choosing their implements of needlework, and some specimens are to be found in which ivory, mahogany and satinwood veneer have part. It consists of two rollers, between which are stretched the warp of fine threads, sometimes of silk, though, unfortunately,

cotton has often been used. These threads are kept in their right places by means of a toothed spreader. As the work proceeds the finished portion is rolled up on the top roller, and a corresponding length of warp is unwound from the lower roller. For the weft a long thread was used, passed through an extremely fine needle, and beads one less in number than the weft threads were picked up on it, and passed beneath the weft. They were then pressed up from below so that each bead was between two weft threads, and the thread was then passed back through them, thus securing the warp between the two wefts. The result of this method of work is a very close and even surface, exactly alike on both sides and absolutely concealing the threads. This distinguishes it from knitting, which always shows the silk to a considerable extent on the wrong side, and slightly on the right. Loomed beadwork is sometimes used in solid strips, but more generally it was worked in small panels alternating with chains of the daisy pattern. It is always used for little pieces of personal ornament, especially necklaces, but a few rectangular bags on a larger scale were made. The beads employed are extraordinarily small and cannot now be obtained. Some years ago, wishing to have a broken panel in a necklace replaced, we made enquiries in Paris, Venice and Russia with a view to obtaining the requisite beads, but with no result. However, the necessary repairs were accomplished by demolishing a very dilapidated fragment which opportunely came my way. The small clasps used on these necklaces

are evidently made especially for the purpose, as they are drilled with the exact number of tiny holes to take the warp threads. They are small rectangular snaps of gilt metal.

Under the heading of plain stringing come all those pieces in which the beads are assembled by the use of needle and thread only, and quite elaborate results were sometimes achieved by it. Fringes and tassels on purses were often almost lacelike in the complexity of their patterns, and purses and bags were made up of small diamond-shaped meshes; the stocking shape was generally adopted for this method. One of the writers has a very pretty one of turquoise-coloured beads with rings of gilt metal and tassels of mixed turquoise and gilt beads, the lining of pink silk. This little purse was said to have been a wedding present in 1816.

#### CUT-STEEL BEADWORK

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries there was a very decided admiration for ornaments that flashed and glittered. Diamonds, of course, led the fashion for the élite, but for occasions when diamonds were unsuitable, and for those who did not own them, their poor relations, strass, paste, marcasite and cut-steel, were all employed to form very attractive objects of jewelry. Of course, these all required the hand of the trained craftsman to manipulate them, and the home-worker welcomed the cut-steel bead as giving an opportunity for the introduction of the desired sparkle into many of the knick-knacks and trinkets, the making of which

occupied so many of his leisure hours. These beads were made in various sizes and patterns, the greater number being of about the same size as the contemporary glass beads, and we consider that the smaller the beads the earlier the piece as a rule. They were strung into chains and necklaces and knitted into purses and bags, but not, we think, loomed. The knitted purses are not often worked so as to show a solid surface of steel, which would have made them too heavy to be convenient, but as a rule the beads are arranged to form a pattern, generally a simple affair of diamonds, stripes or chevrons, or dotted evenly over the whole surface against a background of ruby, royal blue, or green silk, the ends finished off with tassels or fringe. On a somewhat more elaborate character are the châtelaines of steel beads interspersed with Wedgwood medallions of blue and white jasper ware. They are generally framed in finely-cut steel mounts, but some of the cameos are made in pairs fixed back-to-back, and have a groove running all round at the point of juncture. These are sometimes mounted in frames of steel beads strung on wire and tightly fastened round the groove. The beads for the chains are of various patterns, as a diversity of shapes was specially made for the purpose. In judging these châtelaines the fineness of the medallions is really of greater importance than the beadwork, but they never show to better advantage than when surrounded by the cut-steel, and it is a great mistake so remove them from their settings, even if these are not of the finest order.

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## CHAPTER XXI

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### NEEDLEWORK PICTURES AND POLE-SCREEN PANELS

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IT is difficult to decide exactly as to what should or should not be included under the heading of "Needlework Pictures." It might be held to cover the delightful wall-coverings of stitchery on canvas, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries approximated very closely to the beauty of the woven tapestries which they so closely followed in style, or those still earlier examples of embroidery which in mediæval times caused English needlework to be renowned throughout Europe—but in this chapter I propose to deal only with those pieces which lend themselves to separate framing either for wall-decoration or a spanels for pole-screens, these clearly occupying positions which would otherwise be filled by paintings on canvas or paper.

As the subject is large and my space perforce limited, we shall confine ourselves to those examples which were worked in England during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

With the possibility of an exceedingly varied technique it is natural that pictorial subjects should be carried out in a variety of ways, though indeed it is surprising how widely spread certain fashions in



embroidery were, and practically all needlework pictures may be classified as either worked in counted stitches on linen canvas (tapestry pictures) or silk stitchery on silk grounds.

Of the former those dating from the seventeenth century are the most interesting, many of them being exquisitely worked, while they show a true feeling for decorative design (though it is certainly somewhat naïvely expressed) and a real understanding of the limitations of workmanship and material.

The work is invariably carried out on unbleached linen canvas (single thread), and for the most part a lightly twisted woollen yarn is employed for the stitchery, though silk was often introduced for portions of the design. This silk appears to be radiant Oriental floss and was either slightly twisted as the work progressed, or used in strands untwisted. The colouring of both wools and silks was originally extremely brilliant, and in many instances absolutely crude, but time and exposure to light has generally toned these violent tints to an harmonious whole—a result very likely counted on to some extent by the worker. However that may be, the pleasing mellow tones of these pictures at the present day are very different when compared with the original hues, which still retain their brilliancy at the back of the work.

The stitches used are varied, though tent-stitch and cross-stitch predominate very largely. Tent-stitch is a slanting stitch worked over one thread: it is *uncrossed* "cross-stitch." It is only used for fine work and lends itself well to delicate shading, the gradations possible

when this stitch is used being extremely subtle, especially so where blues are concerned, as it was apparently easier to obtain numerous shades of this colour than of others.

Cross-stitch over a single thread is known as *petit point*—when carried over two threads it is known as *gros point*. Either size is used to carry out complete pictures, or both are used in combination in one picture, most generally the *petit point* for the central portion, which is generally either figures or a group of flowers, while the larger stitch is used for scroll work and other decorative features which surround the principal subject.

The arrangement of almost all seventeenth century needlework pictures, however they are carried out, is somewhat similar. There is as a rule a central group, surrounded by subordinate incidents, the intervening spaces being filled up by unrelated and often incongruous details. Where possible the workers liked to place their principal figure or figures on a dais with a canopy above and flanked by two pillars hung with curtains. Biblical events were often selected for illustration, and in a few cases classical subjects. A very favourite treatment was to depict the King and Queen or a Lord and his Lady in the central position and to work their palaces or seats in the top corners together with other bits of landscape, while the Lion and Unicorn or other weird beasts (possibly the "supporters" proper to the heraldry of the persons whose portraits appear) fill up the lower corners. The little detached objects which crowd the spare spaces have generally no relation to the main composition.

The canvas work pictures worked towards the end of the seventeenth century were rather more sophisticated in style. The interest was more centralised, and though there was a good deal of detail in the surrounding parts, it was subordinate to the main theme. Classical subjects were much more frequent, though scriptural scenes were not entirely neglected, but the fashion for the two central figures under the canopy had passed.

During the early years of the eighteenth century canvas work pictures continued to be worked, and many of those executed in the days of Queen Anne are very attractive, though the designs are perhaps less adapted to the art of the needle than those of the previous reign. They are very often obviously copied from paintings. Watteau-like scenes are frequently chosen as their subjects, e.g. one or more figures dancing, or a shepherdess listening to the piping of her swain. These are often skilfully executed, the shading being very delicate; in many cases the tint being changed every two or three stitches.

When needlework went out of favour as the chief occupation of ladies of the leisured classes naturally the number of pictures executed diminished.\* There were, however, a few carried out in early Georgian days in the counted stitches on canvas. These are generally found mounted on pole-screens. Pastoral and "Chinese" subjects prevail, but on the whole the designs show much less taste than in earlier times and the workmanship is decidedly coarser and inferior. *Gros point* alone is very often used, and when small

\* *The Spectator*.—Letter 606, October 13, 1714.

objects are depicted in this stitch they have a stilted squareness which is very disagreeable when the design is of a pictorial character, though it is merely characteristic if suitable patterns are used.

For half a century or more canvas worked pictures seemed to be no longer the mode. Quite a number indeed were worked, but they were the products of individual taste and cannot be classified.

At the end of the eighteenth century there was a revival of interest in needlework generally, and canvas pictures reappear. They are often scriptural in subject, the figures are rather large and are dressed in more or less Oriental costumes, a medium-sized stitch being used throughout. The greater number of these pictures appear to have been worked as show pieces at "Young Ladies' Seminaries." They are somewhat perfunctory in character, and the workmanship, though even, often shows a lack of appreciation of the niceties of shading.

#### PICTURES IN SILK EMBROIDERY ON SILK AND SATIN GROUNDS

During the seventeenth century a considerable number of these pictures were worked and their designs resemble in many respects their contemporaries in *petit point*. Naturally they are somewhat freer in execution than those worked on canvas, as the needlewoman was not tied by the necessity of carrying out patterns in stitches of a given size and direction, but there is the same idea of a principal group with subsidiary incidents in the corners, the intervening spaces

## PLATE 30.

## NEEDLEWORK PICTURES AND SCREEN PANELS.

1. Original design for a screen by Adam, dated 1776.
2. Needlework picture in brilliant colours in *gros* and *petit point*. Early 18th Century.

*The property of Mr. Breton.*

being filled with disconnected sprays of flowers, butterflies, birds, insects and such things. These pictures are rarely worked in ordinary flat stitches, those that are so worked being generally somewhat early. Almost all have portions carried out in "purl" and "knotting," and as the century advanced the tendency towards giving the different parts a considerable relief becomes more marked, until finally that very curious style of needlework known as "stump-work" was developed. The framed or "picture" pieces of this work are decidedly rare, as it is more usually mounted in the form of caskets or writing cabinets. Still quite a number of examples exist, most usually framed in English "lacquer."

The one exceptional feature of stump-work is the extraordinary way in which the embroidered portions stand away from the ground; in many cases the little figures are almost in the round, their dresses being made and trimmed as if for tiny dolls. The faces are sometimes of carved wood over which satin is strained, or else they are padded thickly and covered with button-holing. The stitches used are mostly those employed in Venice point, but, of course, they are worked in variously coloured silks which are somewhat coarser than the exceedingly fine thread used in the lace.

The canopy over the central figures is often most skilfully worked and trimmed, with the curtains and draperies padded so as to represent the folds in a truly realistic way. Butterflies afforded the embroideresses a great opportunity for exercising their skill, and the wings stand away from the ground. In some cases

these are said to have been worked separately and stitched on, in others the buttonhole-stitch is worked outwards from a single row stitched into the ground work. Examples in which the work, though raised, had been executed directly on to the satin ground are generally far happier in effect than those where the embroidery has been carried out on a linen ground and "appliqué" on to the satin.

In many of these stump-work pictures the worker has, in her effort to attain realistic effects, used devices which are certainly outside the needleworker's domain. Sheets of mica represent water, real pearls and tiny gold chains adorn the necks of the figures. Amber, coral and mother-of-pearl are used to represent the rockwork of an Eastern strand, while peacock feathers, gold and silver thread and precious stones are introduced into the costumes. All these extraneous devices certainly detract from the artistry of the work, but they are in keeping with the taste of a period which had a great love for "conceits" and curious details.

The vogue for these raised work pictures appears to have died out quite suddenly, exactly why or when it is difficult to say; possibly it was found that they took so long to execute that they interfered with the large schemes so popular at the very end of the seventeenth century, which included suites of wall hangings and coverings for whole sets of furniture, enterprises at once more showy and more useful.

There were very few silk work pictures in the early years of the eighteenth century; individual examples occur, but they are not as a rule very interesting either

in technique or design, and in most cases are attempts to copy the embroideries imported from the East.

About 1760-70 the embroidery of panels on silk for framing, either for hanging on walls or for mounting as pole-screens, took on a new lease of life. The stereotyped bouquet of flowers—roses, tulips and anemones—which had done duty as a motif for so many forms of decoration, was first favourite, being reproduced in a hundred forms, having a strong family likeness, but differing in detail. Adam designed several screen-panels much in the prevailing mode, and in many cases quite unlike the style usually associated with his name. Instead of slight festoons of flowers and delicate tracteries, these designs show massive groups and wreaths of flowers to which the necessary classical touch is afforded by the introduction of an Etruscan vase. The embroidering of these flowers called for no mean skill on the part of the needlewomen, but there were many who were well practised in the craft : the decoration of the garments worn at Court and the flowering of waistcoats and “sprigging” of aprons and petticoats, giving employment to a considerable number of sempstresses.

From about 1770 on to the end of the eighteenth century is the heyday of the type of needlework picture which many people find the most attractive. These represent figures of young girls or children amidst Arcadian surroundings, the drapery, foliage and part of the landscape being carried out in stitchery while the distance, sky and the flesh of the figures are tinted in water-colours. The source of inspiration is almost



always the engravings after Bartolozzi, Kauffmann and others of a similar character. The figures at their best are graceful and well posed, and the needlework is harmonious and delicate in colour. In good examples the stitches are carefully worked so that their direction helps to give form and modelling of the folds of the drapery and foliage. The painting also varies in quality; in some the faces are the work of the painstaking amateur and though not unpleasing are insipid. A few show the touch of a skilled miniaturist, and when this is the case and the needlework is of good quality the result is most attractive. However good the work, if the subject should chance to be a Biblical one, the market value of the picture will be less than one of inferior workmanship, provided that it depicts a girl, child or Arcadian group such as a shepherd and shepherdess with woolly lambs and leafy background worked in chenille. Our own preference is for the pictures worked without chenille in rather small smooth stitchery.

A less agreeable style of picture which, however, was very popular, was worked in imitation of black and white engravings in fine black silk, or in human hair. They so often represent a female figure weeping over a tomb or cenotaph that we feel sure that working them must have been the fashionable occupation for ladies while in mourning. Probably it was not *comme il faut* to trifle with gay-coloured silks and worsteds at such periods, but even the most austere upholder of etiquette would hardly object to these uncommonly dismal *tours de force*. Landscape pictures are sometimes

carried out in the same way, but they are not so characteristic. It is noticeable that in these pictures though the worker uses for the most part almost microscopic stitches, where they are effective, stitches half an inch or more in length are introduced without hesitation. This, of course, is quite justifiable when a worked picture is concerned, as it is subject to no wear or rubbing and the one object is to obtain a good effect.

Rather late in the eighteenth century small oval embroideries in black or colours were surrounded with rather finicking wreaths and festoons, often caught up with embroidered bows. The central picture was often framed in sequins. They are most generally copied from engravings, and in many cases actual prints on satin were mounted in the same way.

Henceforward the needlework picture steadily degenerated, and rather large Biblical scenes designed and embroidered in a tame perfunctory way betray the fact that they were worked as a task rather than as a pleasure. They are generally ugly and not worth acquiring from a collector's point of view.

There are a number of forgeries of needlework pictures to be seen even in respectable dealers' shops. These are seldom very well executed, and the materials used should betray them at once even to the inexperienced.

"Filoselle" silk is the most easily obtainable in the faded tones required and, of course, instantly stamps a piece as modern. The back of a picture should always be examined and should show much brighter tints than the front (though the fact that it does so is not a proof

that it is old—it is an easy matter to fade most silks by exposure under plate glass to a strong sun); if the back is the same in colour as the front, it is pretty sure to be a reproduced piece. Old canvas work has always a hand-woven linen ground with the threads an even distance apart. To judge of this the unworked portion of the border should be examined as "*gros point*" draws the threads together in the embroidered part. Stump-work even has been copied, but the reproductions are almost always much coarser in effect than the old, in fact we should hardly think even the very high prices now given would pay for the extremely delicate and intricate stitchery if it were to be accomplished nowadays. The more general proceeding is to take an almost destroyed box or casket and apply the best parts of the stump-work on to a panel, spreading them out much more than in the original and filling in the ground with almost flat work either genuinely old or modern. An important-looking piece is thus produced which has a quite passable resemblance to the real thing, and is indeed not without some interest if the old fragments are of good workmanship, but it is certainly fraudulent to pass off such panels as "Genuine old Stuart Embroidery." Transferred work, either stump or any other kind, loses much in value. If repair is inevitable, it is much better to have the remaining portions of the groundwork strengthened by a backing to which they may be attached by skilled hands so as to diminish the interest of the workmanship as little as possible, the sensitiveness of the outline being entirely lost when ordinary appliqué methods are used.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### FANCY SCISSORS

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CLOSELY allied to steel snuffers, and as well worth attention, are steel scissors with fancy bows. Very few have been made in recent years; but sixty years ago and earlier, they were produced in Sheffield in considerable numbers, and on a commercial basis. Many of them possessed considerable artistic merit, and the fact that they were invariably the work of craftsmen should give them an antiquarian value in the eyes of those who hold that no machine-made article deserves a place in a collector's cabinet. The photograph reproduced and facing page 240 gives a fair idea of the craftsmanship of the scissor-filer. The implements illustrated are patterns designed and filed, about a hundred years ago, by one Peter Atherton, who was regarded in his day as one of the cleverest scissor-makers in Hallamshire. His pattern books are among the treasured possessions of J. and W. Ragg, who still make scissors, but the old workmen have died out, and scissor-filing is a lost art. It was slow work, calling for patience, accuracy and close application. A good many hours were spent on a single pair of bows, and only a very

## PLATE 31.

## FANCY SCISSORS.

Group of Three Pattern Scissors, showing pierced and filed bows by Peter Atherton.

*Messrs. I. & R. Ragg, Sheffield.*





low rate of pay made it at all possible to produce scissors to sell. The craft is never likely to be revived, because the wages per hour now current in the cutlery trade would not allow of production at a price which the public would pay.

To make a pair of fancy bow scissors the forge hand had first to rough out the two members. The blanks which were to form the bows were hammered flat, an oval hole being struck in the centre of each end. This was the foundation on which the filer worked. How he set out the pattern is not now clearly understood, but probably it was roughly traced with a hard steel pricker. Any solid spaces were next drilled with holes a little smaller than the least dimension of each aperture in that part of the design. Then the filer set to work, and with a variety of fine files, flat, round, square, half-round and even triangular in section, and most of them tapering from the tang to the point, he removed the superfluous metal. All sorts of little refinements were introduced into the more expensive models. The edges were scalloped, facets were filed on the prominent parts, and the surfaces were often burnished until they took a high polish. Some of the examples were enamelled in colours, others were gilded, and sometimes a legend was engraved or etched on the blades.

The finished product was regarded as a proper present for a gentleman to make to a lady, and doubtless in an age when stitchery was cultivated as a feminine art, the gifts were fully appreciated. One of the most elaborately decorated pair of scissors ever



made in Sheffield was presented to Queen Victoria on her coronation. The filer was James Atherton, the brother of Peter, aforementioned, who was sixty years old at the time. He was employed by a firm trading as Thomas Wilkinson & Sons, and the task occupied about four months. James Atherton made two replicas of these scissors, and according to the story current some years ago he spoiled one pair. The others were completed and were, and may still be, in the Weston Park Museum, at Sheffield.

Probably the finest display of fancy scissors ever shown at one time and in one place was Wilkinson's exhibit at the Crystal Palace in 1851. There were six pairs less than 2 in. long, and the smallest, according to the official catalogue, were only one-sixteenth of an inch long, and the weight one-twenty-fourth of a gram. At the other end of the scale was a pair 24 in. long, which weighed 8 lbs. It is probable that James Atherton made some of these scissors. He would have been in that year a little over seventy, and it is known that he was close upon eighty before he finally laid down his tools. He began to work at eight years of age; he spent the whole of his life with one firm, and it is recorded of him that he never earned more than 25s. per week. Scissor-filing was a side trade with this typical workman of the old school; he was known as a "putter-together," that is to say his business was to take the forged and ground blades and fit them together so that they opened and shut smoothly, and cut cleanly from heel to point. There is a great deal more in a pair of scissors than meets

the eye of the uninitiated, and proper fitting has much to do with the way they cut. Take a pair of good scissors and watch carefully how the two blades close one on the other. At every point as the closing proceeds the opposing edges are in smooth contact, and yet, when the cut is finished, the points of contact are at the two extreme ends of the blades, and there is "daylight" through the whole of the intervening length. The "putter-together" is responsible for this factor in the efficiency of a pair of scissors, and also for the exact fitting of the joint, which in these old fancy scissors was always first-rate, although many of the survivals are now nothing to boast of in this respect, for wear and regrinding has played its part.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### TUNBRIDGE WARE

---

**T**HIS may fairly be given a place among the lesser artistic manufactures of this country.

It is not, however, one of the arts which date back beyond the memory of man, for it seems to have begun to be practised about the end of the sixteenth century, or the very beginning of the seventeenth century.

Apparently the idea originated in the brain of a turner of fancy and other articles that colour might be used in turned articles in addition to the form alone. Instead of applying the colour superficially, as the natives of India do to their turned nest of boxes and other toys, he thought of applying his colour structurally, i.e. in the piece of wood before it was turned. In other words, his piece of wood before turning was built up of several longitudinal fillets of various colours, arranged according to a design, glued together under pressure into one solid and coherent whole. A later development of the art was to arrange the bundle of tiny strips and fillets into much more elaborate patterns, consisting of round, diamond-shaped pieces and ovals. These, when glued into a solid, were

cut at right angles to their length into very thin laminæ or cross-sections. These were then inlaid either in wood previously veneered or in a small fancy article of solid wood in a place prepared for them. Later, as the workmen became more expert, they aimed at higher effects and they tried to represent landscapes, portraits, buildings, fruits and other still-life.

The palette of the artist in this ware consists of an infinite variety of woods. Some of them are coloured naturally, others, like the Tunbridge green oak, tinted by incipient decay in the wood itself, others coloured and stained by the use of various dyes and by the chemical action of the chalybeate water of Tunbridge Wells on specially chosen woods.

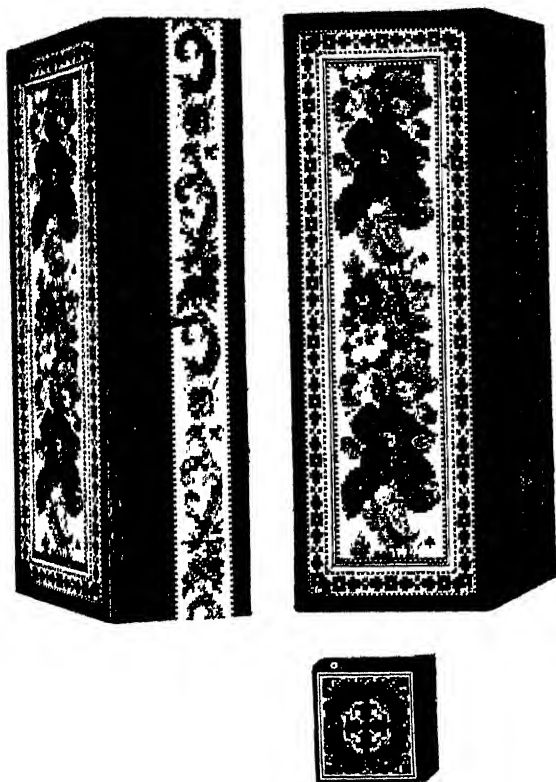
All through the history of the art of what was once called English mosaic, one must admire without stint the wonderful cabinet work of the countless small articles such as needle-books, hairpin cases, card-cases, stamp-boxes, *et hoc genus omne*, which were the foundation necessary to carry the mosaic superstructure. This delicate cabinet work, when finished, was polished with great care and a very fine surface obtained. Nowadays spirit varnish is considered good enough, and every rude knock leaves its tell-tale mark on the ware.

The work is quite different from the straw-work made by the French prisoners during the Napoleonic wars. If well done it looks very well indeed; if carelessly designed and roughly finished it looks no better than a design carried out in Berlin woolwork on canvas—a type of fancy work not yet extinct in our art needlework shops and departments.

## PLATE 32.

## TUNBRIDGE WARE.

- |              |                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Pin-box   | } Late 18th or early 19th Century. |
| 2. Glove-box |                                    |





Besides small ware such as mentioned above, there were to be had larger boxes, such as glove-boxes, cribbage-boards and boxes, Pope Joan boards, work-boxes, and tea-caddies after the introduction of that beverage in 1645.

In 1728 a turner of the name of Barton had a factory on Mount Ephraim, employing twenty workmen, and a glove-box in our possession still retains the paper label on the bottom with his or a descendant's name. The label is an oval with the following description :

T. Barton  
Late Nye  
Manufacturer  
Mount Ephraim  
and  
Parade  
Tunbridge Wells.

At no time could the industry be termed a staple industry of the Wells. The original maker, one *Wise*, a turner of Tunbridge, seems to have migrated nearer to Tunbridge Wells. Others set up at various times in the eighteenth century. The factories were small and the output was never large, as it was, all of it, handmade work and the necessary training was very slow. It was not until towards the end of the eighteenth century that the work was established in Tunbridge Wells. Fanny Burney in her Diary (1778-1840) refers to a visit by her to Tunbridge Wells in 1779 and mentions the " little millinery and Tunbridge ware shops."

In recent times a bold adaptation has been success-



fully made by Mr. A. Rowley. By the use of suitably coloured woods of some size he has managed to secure some bold pictorial effects. At the present time the industry is not in a flourishing state, Labour troubles and workshop conditions, high wages and small sales all militate against the prosperous working of the art, and it would seem that there is a chance of the art being scheduled on the list of those that are lost.

Celia Fiennes, a daughter of Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, a Parliamentary officer, and sister of the third Viscount Saye and Sele, in her interesting diary, "Through England on a Side Saddle in the time of William and Mary" (1689-1709), wrote as follows: "I being in Kent this year shall insert something of Tunbridge (Wells)," and goes on to record that she sees there "are shoppes full of all sorts of toys, silver, china, milliness and all sorts of curious wooden ware wch this place is noted for. The delicate neate and thin ware of wood both white and lignum vitæ wood." The dear lady has probably misread her notes or misunderstood the name of the wood. We can understand lignum vitæ being used by a currier, but not by a worker in Tunbridge ware.

In 1745 Elizabeth Montague wrote from Tunbridge Wells to the Duchess of Portland:

"I have taken the liberty to send you some Tunbridge ware, which in your magnificence you will despise, but I desire it may be sent to your Dairy, and there humbler thoughts will possess you, and churns of butter, prints, and skimming dishes will appear of consequence."

Samuel Derrick,\* writing towards the end of the eighteenth century, said: "Were the manufacture smuggled abroad and then imported as a foreign commodity, I am persuaded the people would run after it—but alas! everybody knows that it is English and the encouragement is therefore poor."

\* Letters written from Liverpool, Chester, Corke, The Lake of Killarney, Tunbridge Wells, Bath, by Samuel Derrick (1787).



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